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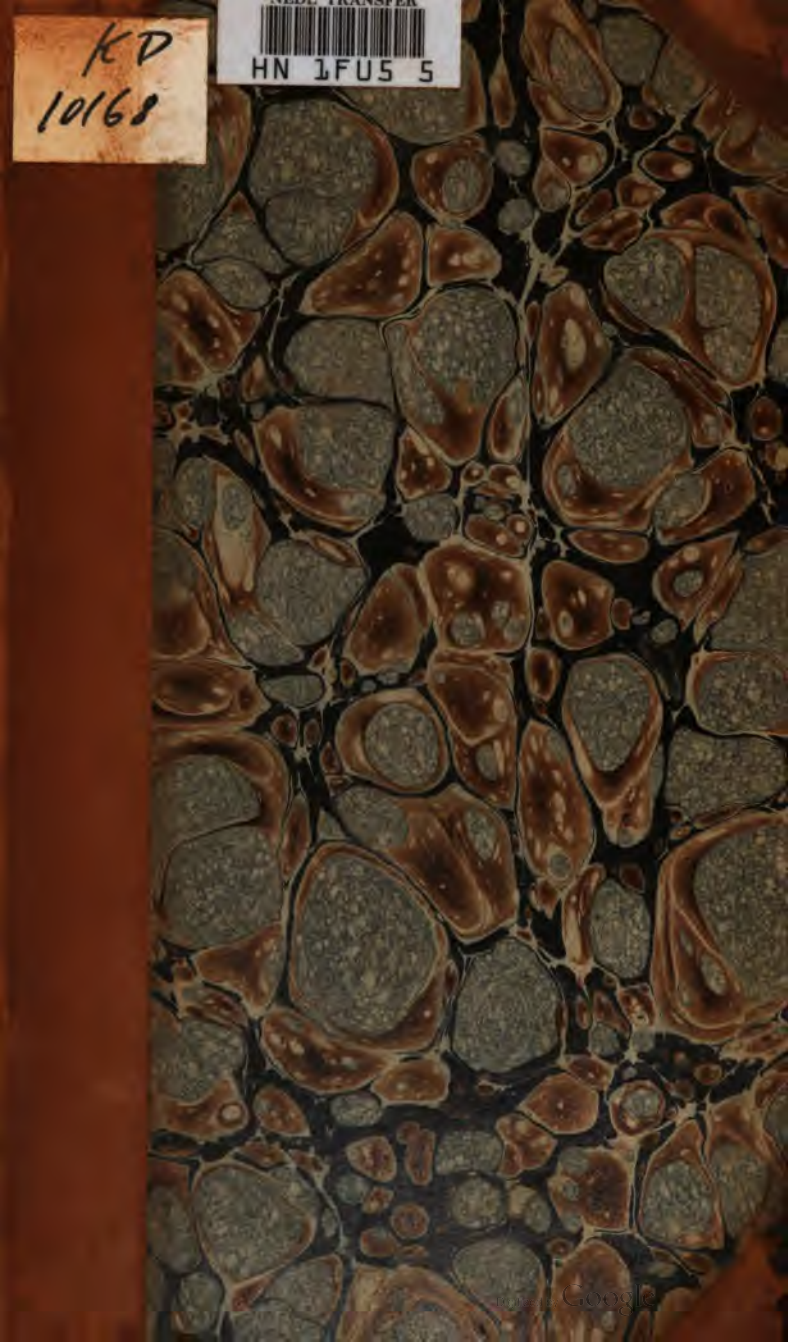

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Village-Conversations;

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THE VICAR's FIRE-SIDE.

VOL. II.

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VILLAGE CONVERSATIONS;

OR,

The Vicar's Fire-Side.

DEDICATED TO MRS. HANNAH MORE.

BY

SARAH RENOU.

Vous y avez fait entendre de solides verités, les plus beaux secrets de la nature, les plus importants principes de la métaphysique ; vous ne vous êtes point contenté de l' écorce de la philosophie : vous en avez approfondi tous les secrets, cependant cette savante philosophie, n' a été pour vous qu'un passage pour vous elever á une plus noble science, je veux dire à la science de la Religion. RACINE.

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Preface.

THE Author of the following pages is conscious of her temerity, in attempting a Classification of such importance and magnitude as that of the degrees of the Human Mind; but as there is no science more intimately connected with the happiness of mankind than 'the knowledge of man,' or mental philosophy, she trusts that by endeavouring to simplify those abstruse points of metaphysical theory upon which the philosophy of mind is founded, and reducing them to a level with the ordinary capacities of Youth, she has performed a task which, if only calculated to excite more attentive observation upon the nature and operation of the intellectual faculties, may not be totally useless to her contemporaries, nor unlikely to benefit the rising generation.

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ADDRESS TO THE READER.

In the following Conversations, neither the regularity or precision of an Essay, nor the profound investigations of a Philosophical Treatise, has been attempted. "The Art of "Conversation consists in never exhausting or "dwelling too long on any subject—in shewing "its best point of view, rather than every thing "that can be said upon it—its most striking "features, rather than its minute peculiarities."

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Errata.

Page 9, line 25. For ‘ extending’ read *enlarging.*
—— 20, — 20. — ‘ for intention,’ r. *inclination.*
—— 22, — 19. — ‘ promote to the,’ r. *promote the*
—— 31, — 14. — ‘ freely,’ r. *fully.*
—— 32, — 3. — ‘ accidents,’ r. *incidents.*
——, — 16. — ‘ doings,’ r. *designs*
—— 37, — 11. — ‘ traced to,’ r. *derived from*
—— 48, — 19. — ‘ natural,’ r. *national.*
—— 77, — 2. — ‘ excites,’ r. *inspires.*
—— 87, — 21. — ‘ the,’ r. *this.*
—— 98, — 21. — ‘ Sytem,’ r. *System.*
——144, — 16. — ‘ serey,’ r. *serez.*

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VILLAGE-CONVERSATIONS,

OR,

The Vicar's Fire-Side.

CONVERSATION I.

On the various Orders of the Minds of Men, and their General Division or Classification.

IN venturing, said Charles Wentworth, upon a visit to the delightful though abstracted regions of metaphysical theory, the mind is involuntarily led to investigate causes and analyze principles, of which perhaps it before entertained very imperfect notions. We perceive effects, and in tracing their origin, are led beyond the delusions of ocular perception, and the imposing restraints of prejudice and association, to view plain and simple principles in their naked unsophisticated form; hence observations that tend in any respect to elucidate the important science of the human mind, cannot be useless to man;

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for if but one ray of truth shine amidst the gloom of apparent obscurity, the sacred emanation may diffuse its influence, and future observations may place the philosophy of mind in a more clear and simple point of view.

These reflections encourage me to propose a short investigation of the obvious diversity in the minds of men, the different orders or gradations of intellect, and the causes to which this difference may be imputed. To propose a classification or arrangement of these, it must be confessed is presumptuous; but every attempt, however humble, to promote the advancement of knowledge, I hope is at least entitled to indulgence, and when surveyed with the eye of philanthropy, may be pronounced laudable.

My dear Charles! said the Vicar, have you duly considered the extent of the subject you propose for our discussion—the great abstruseness of disquisition, and the profoundness of the researches in which you would involve us? Partial as I am to a vigorous exertion of the perceptive faculties, I do not love to enter upon speculations which may be useless from their profundity, or incomprehensible to the general capacity of the human species.

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My dear Sir! replied Charles, if in the history of mankind, persons to whom we are most essentially indebted for their discoveries and instructions, had been deterred from imparting their notions by the fear of embarrassing the understanding of others, permit me to ask, could material advancements have been made in science? If our ideas are erroneous, proceeding only from defective judgment, we are surely excusable for imparting them, provided they are not injurious; but if they are in any degree connected with perceptions of general utility, to communicate them as hints upon which abler heads may make improvement, I presume, is not only excusable, but praiseworthy.

Investigations, Charles! said Harriet, must be useless, if incomprehensible; and I request you will recollect that your auditory does not entirely consist of metaphysicians and philosophers.

I will endeavour to oblige you, if you will only explain the point of view in which you wish to be considered.

As Women, replied Harriet.

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And as rational beings, said Sophronia.

The terms are not incompatible; and I will endeavour to oblige you both, if my proposition be acceded to.

Well, Charles! said the Vicar, we await your sentiments upon this subject.

The diversity discernible in the minds of men excited our notice on a former occasion, and was then considered to arise principally from the various incidents that occur to the individual in the course of his life, but particularly in its earlier stages, when impressions are more readily imbibed and more permanently retained, than those which are received at any subsequent period. That minds are positively the same cannot be asserted: their nature and their faculties may be so, but not their natural powers; otherwise the diversity of perception so plainly discernible in childhood, would not be apparent. This may be attributed to a greater degree of susceptibility; as some minds are more peculiarly constituted than others to admit perceptions and receive impressions; and from this natural capacity they may be ranked as of a different order to those

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which are not endowed with so quick and lively an apprehension. Minds of this standard have other qualities peculiar to them, that are not generally inherent by our species; which leads me to conceive the possibility of a classification, and if I may venture to propose the following arrangement, I think it will be found calculated to advance the progress of our enquiries.

Minds, then, may be divided into five different orders or classes.

First. The highly endowed mind, or that which inherits from Providence a greater readiness of perception, quickness of apprehension, or stronger natural powers; such, for instance, as Newton, Locke, or Milton.

Secondly. The mind, as we generally consider it, in a well organised body, which is capable of every improvement of which it may naturally be susceptible. Such a mind being excited by judicious attention in youth, to a frequent exertion of its faculties, acquires from their early use greater powers, than if suffered at that period to remain dormant; although if this degree of exertion be not continued until the mind arrives at maturity, it can scarcely be estimated as of this second order.

Thirdly. The same order of natural mind

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that may not have been excited in early life to a vigorous exercise of its faculties, but which, at a subsequent period, emerged from the supineness of either poverty or a state of easy competence, to an active use of its powers. Such minds would doubtless admit of several gradations or subdivisions, were we inclined to analyze them minutely.

Fourthly. The same naturally endowed mind, which is not excited by circumstance, situation, or inclination, to any subsequent vigorous exertion of its faculties.

And Fifthly. The same natural mind, which, from the peculiar organization of the frame it inhabits, or the physical weakness or infirmities of the body, is not capable of any great degree of energy, and whose powers thus necessarily remain dormant, because incapable, from the restraining shackles of infirmity, of exercising the faculties which it inherits from nature.

To this classification may also be added, those minds which are not equally formed for exertion of their faculties, or rather not possessing faculties capable of expansion, or that are deficient in mental endowments. But these, like the first order, may be considered as phenomena, and alike uncommon.

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In your classification, Charles! said William, you divide the mind into five, or rather six orders, and yet only make three distinct classes; as your second, third, fourth, and indeed your fifth class, are precisely the same from nature, but only differing from the effects of circumstance or physical organization.

True; and strictly speaking, we might perhaps confine ourselves to this division; but the obvious diversity of the powers of mind will, I think, authorise my arrangement. The classification might be considerably enlarged, if mankind were considered only in regard to character; but I prefer confining myself to the primeval nature of the mind, or its original powers. Its subsequent formation depends so much on education, situation, observation and incident, that to divide the mind properly, as according to the diversity observable in the human species, is impossible; unless indeed we were to arrange character, and consider the intellectual in the same manner as the natural world, divided into classes, orders, genera, &c.

And why may we not attempt this arrangement? replied William. We have entered the

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regions of metaphysical abstraction, and although our disquisitions may not benefit, they cannot injure us. It will, at least, be an exercise of intellect that may produce more attentive observations upon character, as well as on the faculties of the soul; and as we have commenced the subject, I propose that we proceed to enquire not only into the causes, but the nature and attainment of character, its general diversity amongst mankind, its influence upon society in the amelioration of existing evils, and as likely to produce a greater degree of happiness in a future state of being.

My dear children! said the Vicar, you are not aware of the extent, boldness, and difficulty of your proposition; nor can you conceive how easily we may substitute the fanciful delusions of the imagination for the researches of reason. Speculative theory may exercise the intellect, but does it confer upon mankind any essential benefit? I would wish this point to be examined, before I yield my assent to further progress in this discussion.

Speculative points, replied Charles, must be investigated, before truth can be clearly ascer-

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tained. This may be proved from the history of Science. Were not the laws which govern the universe, matters of speculation before they were acknowledged as established laws? Could the powers of attraction, gravitation, &c. have been positively determined, had not the ideas previously suggested themselves, and subsequent researches proved the validity or ascertained the fallacy of each hypothesis. In the science of Astronomy, for example, how different were the systems before the true one was discovered! How slow, yet progressive, has been the advancement to the present state of science in every instance! But if timidity had restrained the communication of every idea to which reflections on the subject gave birth, no subsequent improvement could have taken place; nor would science have arrived at its present zenith. These considerations, in my opinion, render the proposed investigation justifiable; and if in our researches we soar beyond the confines of general percipience, or restrain our observations to too confined a sphere, we shall still be entitled to indulgence, in the difficulty of our attempt, and receive reprehension only from those who, incapable of extending the bounds of science, are fearful of diminishing its lustre by extending its researches.

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How great, said Sir Edward, of late years, has been the advancement of the human mind! A similar proposition, some years since, from a man of the first intellectual eminence, would have been considered an unpardonable presumption; but in this age, our sons venture, with an unprecedented degree of boldness, to propose an investigation into which we ourselves can scarcely enter, and to attempt a discussion which we should have pronounced the height of temerity to suggest.

One cause of the advancement of intellect, said Charles, may be imputed to freedom of enquiry: while we are shackled in our researches, truth cannot be ascertained. I do not, however, propose that we presume to arrange character, but merely to enquire into its general causes. This will lead us to a more intimate acquaintance with ourselves, and be a means of diminishing that pride and vanity to which youth is naturally prone. Humility is a virtue inseparably connected with expansion of intellect, and is most likely to be attained in its genuine simplicity by a proper knowledge of our nature and faculties. It is a very erroneous opinion, imbibed by persons of confined associations, or by superficial

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observers of mankind, to suppose that knowledge or intellect engenders pride; the reverse being, from its very nature, the truth. Pedantry is not the effect of learning, but a disease for which learning, or rather mental expansion, is the only remedy. Where is the child of intellect who has not shrunk into insignificance, in the contemplation of himself—who has not felt his littleness, and the diminutive stature of his most enlarged faculties? The more expanded the mental powers of man, the more exalted his perceptions of the Deity, and the more profound his humility. "A *little* knowledge may be a dangerous thing;" but extended perceptions, and a vigorous exertion of the mental faculties, must, in every respect, be advantageous to the individual, and beneficial, in its general effects, to mankind.

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CONVERSATION II.

On the Subdivisions of the preceding Classification, and Observations on Intellectual Character.

ALLOW me, said Sophronia, to commence our evening's discussion with a quotation, which I would propose as a riddle or enigma. What Science is that, which "is valuable, not so much because it enlarges our knowledge, as because it makes us sensible of our ignorance; and shews that a great part of what speculative men have admired as profound philosophy, is only a darkening of knowledge by words, without understanding?"

The language is so obscure, Sophronia! said William, that it is impossible to discover what Science you allude to. Whatever really enlarges our knowledge, naturally makes us sensible of our ignorance and the limited nature of our faculties; but this is effected by the expansion

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of our ideas, and not in the darkening of our knowledge by the use of words without understanding.

It is Religion, said Harriet; which by enlightening our minds, leads us to perceive the comparative insignificance of all other acquisitions.

Religion is a principle, and not a science, said Sophronia; although it may have been sometimes so termed.

Religion, said the Vicar, is a vital essence residing in the soul, independently of the attainments of the understanding; which, although they increase our perceptions of the Deity, cannot give this divine irradiation. No other knowledge is requisite to possess this principle in its most exalted degree, than a knowledge of God; and this may be enjoyed where learning is not to be found.

The emphatical manner in which the words, A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, was uttered, seriously impressed the younger part of our auditory.

I recollect the sentence, said Charles: it is a

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quotation from Reid; and I suppose you wish to apply it to the subject of our last evening's conversation.

I do so, replied Sophronia. No one who has yet ventured to soar into the region of metaphysics, has escaped without involving himself in the intricacies of a perplexing labyrinth. However clear his own speculations may have seemed to himself, they have not been so to the capacities of others. Few have erected their fabric on ground which has not been shaken by the breath of opinion, or tottered under the speculations of succeeding investigators. How, then, can we hope to succeed in an attempt which has exposed so many to failure.

I do not wish, replied Charles, to establish a theory, nor to suggest new principles. I have merely expressed ideas that occurred to me on the subject, which I confess I have not given myself the trouble satisfactorily to investigate. I conceive, however, that my classification is capable of considerable improvement; and if some person of ability would undertake a similar arrangement, great light might be thrown upon the subject, and the philosophy of mind would

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thus be studied systematically, like other less important sciences.

The study of metaphysics, said Sir Edward, as connected with the origin of our own ideas and sentiments, is useful, if only from its teaching the nature and powers of mind, and leading us to reflect on the causes of our general perceptions. 'The cultivation of Reason, with a view to the investigation of Truth,' says Dugald Stewart in his Essays, 'is one of the most essential means towards the improvement and happiness of the individual.' I am of the same opinion; but still we should take care that our speculations do not soar beyond the confines of general percipience; and also to avoid entering upon investigations which are not likely, from their nature, to be beneficial to man. The science of the mind has in all ages been involved in considerable obscurity. Philosophers have bewildered themselves in the abstruseness of their researches; therefore less qualified enquirers should recollect that 'the science of abstruse learning, when completely attained, will cast no additional light on the paths of life, but only disperse the clouds with which it had overspread them;'*

* Tucker's Light of Nature.

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and that 'Truth is more generally diffused in the world than is commonly imagined; but it is too often disguised, and even corrupted, by an alloy of error, which conceals it from notice, or impairs its utility.'*

The science of the mind, said Charles, has been considerably retarded in its progress, by confining it 'to the test of words and syllables;' which, as Seneca observes, 'lets down the mind, and wears out its powers, by the minuteness of the disquisitions of those who seem anxious to invest philosophy with new difficulties, when it ought to be their aim to display her in all her grandeur.'

The plan which I suggested, by simplifying the theory, although it would not cast new light on the science, if properly attended to, might be very likely to facilitate the means of its attainment, by rendering it less complex and abstruse, and more on a level with the ordinary capacities of the human species; nor can any rational objection be made to this study, when we consider that 'no excuse can be made for him who carries to his grave the neglected and unprofitable seeds of faculties which it depended on himself to have

* Leibnitz.

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tiveness of our faculties, to languish in the vale of mediocrity, when we anxiously desire to attain the mountain of intellectual prescience, to bask in the beams of knowledge, to cull the flowers of science and literature, and sip with delight at the fountain of Truth?

The ardent desire to attain intellectual eminence, replied Charles, is an undoubted proof that the seeds of genius are already sown, and only require proper cultivation to bring them to the perfection of which they are capable; but if this desire proceed from a transitory impulse, and does not excite to the steady and unremitting application of the means necessary for its attainment, the effects cannot be produced. Still, it must be allowed the individual can only exert his powers to the degree of which they are capable. Many may possess genius, in the common acceptation of the term, if they will properly exert the mental faculties they possess; but few are endowed by nature with the ability to become a Newton, a Locke, or a Bacon.

This consideration is, in my opinion, said the Vicar, fraught with comfort; for great is the responsibility attached to superior talents and

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reared to maturity, and of which the fruits bring accessions to human happiness, more precious than all the gratifications which power or wealth can command.'*

The utility of metaphysical investigations consists in their 'affording a general knowledge of the treasures which lie within man, and of the means by which he may convert them to his use and pleasure.' Every plan, therefore, which is calculated to facilitate the acquisition of this knowledge, merits the attention of those who wish to promote the real interests of mankind.

In your arrangement of the human mind, said William, you considered those superior faculties which belong decidedly to Genius, as being of the first class, and that minds of this order were phenomena in nature. But is not this opinion calculated to retard the progress of intellect? Who will presume to say that he possesses mental powers of this standard? Will not, therefore, the ardour of youthful enquiry be extinguished, and perseverance diminished, by the consideration, that notwithstanding our exertions, we cannot attain the eminence after which we aspire; that we are destined, from the diminu-

* Dugald Stewart.

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endowments. Real genius is very rare. A few bright and shining lights have arisen in various ages, to irradiate the path of life, and open the road to science and improvement; but lamentable indeed is the case, when its transcendant powers are employed to injure instead of enlightening mankind.

The second class, continued Charles, admits of divisions, and even of subdivisions, were we inclined to a minute investigation; and these variations are to be imputed principally to situation and circumstance; for although the natural powers may be the same, and excited in childhood to the same degree of observation, yet subsequent events in the life of the individual will vary the powers of mind, and excite or diminish its energies.

The third order admits of several divisions and gradations, and is that to which I consider the ordinary class of geniuses belong. I should place amongst the first genera or subdivision of the first class, many of those persons whom we generally denominate geniuses; as I think upon investigation we should find that their mental energies had most frequently been excited by themselves, or rather called into action by some circumstance which led to the peculiar bias of

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their minds and the subsequent developement of their faculties. My second subdivision should be persons who may possess equal mental powers, but which may not have been equally exerted, or not have displayed their talents in the same degree; and my third genera, such as Sophronia.

You allow me a rank, said Sophronia, to which I cannot aspire.

Indeed, said Sir Edward, I think Charles has decided very justly; and I yield my assent to the placing of Sophronia's intellectual character amongst those of the third genera of the third class.

This class, resumed Charles, will admit of several subdivisions. Seven might easily be exemplified. As we are not, however, entering upon the conduct of a theory, but merely suggesting hints, I will proceed to the fourth class, in which we placed minds of the same natural powers with the two preceding classes, but which had never been excited by circumstances, situation, or intention, to a vigorous exercise of their faculties, which were suffered to remain dormant, because the individual did not possess sufficient energy

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properly to employ the gifts of nature. Sorry am I to say, that to this class belong the bulk of the human race. Unhappy beings! possessed of no resources, no consolations, no enjoyments, except those which they share in common with the lowest animals in the scale of creation.

To this class more particularly belong those persons who, even in the meridian of their lives, pursue with thoughtless avidity that vain and fleeting phantom, Pleasure—who, possessing no taste for rational enjoyments, seek to kill the passing moment in amusements which are incapable of affording or communicating happiness, and which leave no reflections productive of satisfaction.

In the catalogue of pleasures of this description, said Mrs. Wentworth, may we not reckon card-playing? What can be an employment so little becoming rational beings, as to pass hours, for successive evenings, at the card-table, and particularly on that day which we are commanded to devote to the worship of the Creator? How perceptive, thinking, reasoning beings, can devote their time to such frivolous pursuits, and derive amusement from a source so little capable of imparting matter for satisfactory reflection, is

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really astonishing. But how they can suffer their children and dependants to witness the wilful transgression of a positive commandment, is still more unaccountable; as a servant who is not conscientious in performing his duty towards God, cannot be expected conscientiously to perform his duty towards his master.

In social life, said Mrs. Osbourne, we should conform to the inclinations and wishes of our associates, when our doing so is not inconsistent with our principles or ideas of right. There can be no positive harm in amusing ourselves or our friends with this exercise, if it may be so called; yet I am inclined to believe that few persons capable of a rational interchange of sentiment would find it a source of amusement. Complaisance may induce them to promote to the gratification of others; but nothing should compel them to sanction, by their example, on the Sabbath, a custom that may prove highly injurious to morality, and must be inimical to genuine piety.

The lower classes of the community, said Sir Edward, being generally children of habit and prejudice, are frequently incapable of discrimi-

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nation. They can discern little difference between opposition to a civil ordinance, and the transgression of a divine law. Considered as a political institution, the observance of the Sabbath is a most excellent regulation, being calculated to preserve the morals of the people. Therefore moral policy, or a just sense of the duty we owe to our country, independently of religious obligations, should induce us to pay proper respect to that day which is set apart for religious services. But when we consider the advantages that are derived by the individual, and the benefits communicated to society, from the cultivation of devotional feelings, a proper sense of patriotism, or a spark of philanthropy, apart from moral or religious obligation, should surely induce us to refrain, at least one evening in the week, from an amusement which can afford us no real gratification.

I cannot, said the Vicar, conceive that any justifiable excuse can be offered in a Protestant country, for this public and, I will add, shameful transgression of a sacred institution; and he who has no better regulation in his house, for the amusement of Sunday evenings, than card-tables, deserves no pity, when, as is frequently

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the case, he is defrauded by his servants, and despised by his family.

The fifth class, resumed Charles, consists of minds of the same natural powers as the former; but being united to bodies whose infirmity or physical disorganization prevents a proper exertion of the intellectual faculties, they necessarily become inferior to persons of a stronger or better habit of body. Such persons should not incur reprehension: they are entitled to our pity, since their inferiority is involuntary. This consideration should make us indulgent, compassionate and kind to persons of that description. We should seek to alleviate their sufferings by the gentleness of our deportment, and the sympathy of commiserating love.'

This observation may also be applied, said Mrs. Osbourne, to persons of superior intellectual powers; many of whom frequently suffer from various kinds of mental disease, and are on that account no less entitled to our tenderness and commiseration; and as the most violent disorders generally attack persons of the strongest natural constitution, so I believe the strongest minds are subject to the most acute sufferings

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or painful disorders of intellect. Observe in the world the child of apathy, or those, generally speaking, who belong to Charles's fourth class, and you will find that incidents in life, which to the possessor of sensibility are pregnant with the most accute suffering, impart to them only a momentary pain, which is soon forgotten, and seldom remembered with regret. Happy beings! How I envy the cold insensibility that can make them thus dead to anguish, misery, and woe!

My dear Madam! said the Vicar, this is only an ejaculation inspired by the feelings of the moment, and not an observation arising from reflection and judgement.

True, Sir! but I am really sometimes inclined to envy those cold-hearted beings, who are alive to no other sufferings than what is occasioned by their own bodily pain—which their impatience renders doubly acute. Seriously, however, I am no friend to sensibility, though connected with the seeds of every virtue and mental excellence. It has so many bad qualities, that had I lived in ancient times, I think I should have placed it among the evil Genii, or the spirits who were destined to afflict mankind.

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I fear, Madam! said William, our ladies of sentiment and refinement will be highly offended at your placing the power before whose shrine they languish, and from whom they acquire so many of their killing graces and fascinating charms, in so humble a point of view. But what are the bad qualities which you impute to sensibility?

My principal accusation is against its unforgiving nature. It highly resents, says a French author, and never forgets a slight or an indignity. It prefers enduring the most acute anguish, rather than place itself in a situation where it may again receive a wound; which, if inflicted by a hand from whence it expected comfort, it seldom forgives, and never forgets the impression. It participates by sympathy in the sufferings of others, but is unmindful of those which it occasions. If these are amiable qualities, I will become an advocate for sensibility; if not, I must consider its possession, I mean in an excessive degree, as one of the evils which embitter life.

The most tender sensibility, said the Vicar, is generally connected with the most superior

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powers of intellect. Its possession, in situations of trial and suffering, may embitter life, by aggravating and heightening every source of mental pain; but in happy circumstances, it proportionably augments and refines its enjoyments. True sensibility suffers in silence: it does not obtrude its anguish upon an unfeeling world: it seeks, in solitude and obscurity, at least to conceal the woes which it is unable to cure.

Sensibility, said Sophronia, lacerates the soul of sorrow, enervates the mind, weakens its faculties, injures the constitution, and brings many a hapless victim to a premature grave, or what is worse, deprives him of his reason.

Genuine sensibility, said Charles, is inherent with superior minds, and only belongs to the three first classes; it prevails in them to a greater or less degree, according to the acuteness of the feelings or peculiar susceptibility of the individual. The semblance, and not the reality, is to be found in the inferior classes; for with Mrs. Hannah More, I must believe that

> Cold and inert the mental powers would be,
> Without this quickening spark of Deity,

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To draw the rich materials from the mine,
To bid the mass of intellect refine,
To melt the firm, to animate the cold,
And Heaven's own impress stamp on Nature's gold.
To give immortal mind its finest tone,
O Sensibility! is all thy own.

But to resume our subject. It has been stated, that to the preceding classification might be added minds not equally formed by nature for an exertion of their powers, or rather who possess faculties not capable of expansion; but that such minds were exceptions to the general equality of nature, and phenomena as extraordinary as those of the first classification.

Well, Charles! said the Vicar, I must confess that you have treated your subject in a more clear and distinct manner than I thought admissible. But what benefit do you imagine might be derived by society at large from a well-drawn theory on the plan you suggest?

Incalculable benefit, Sir! might be derived from the establishment of such a theory. As where is the generous ardent youth who would suffer himself to be ranked among the fourth class, when by a little mental exertion he might

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ascend to the third?—whilst those of the inferior subdivisions of the third would be equally anxious to ascend a scale higher; and thus progressively the individual might proceed from one degree of intellectual advancement to another—society be proportionably benefited, and many of its existing evils would be ameliorated.

Some hundred years hence, Charles! perhaps, said Sir Edward, your plan may meet with the attention it merits; but at present you can only expect it to be criticised, applauded, ridiculed, condemned, or consigned to oblivion, according to the existing humour of the persons under whose notice it may fall.

Whatever fate may attend my lucrubations, replied Charles, I have the satisfaction to know, that the plan I have suggested, although it may not merit approbation, is not deserving of reprehension, and will receive it from those only who are incapable of contributing even a mite to the improvement of posterity.

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CONVERSATION III.

The Doctrines of Philosophical Necessity and the Free Agency of Man considered, as connected with the dispensations of Divine Providence.

NO subject connected with metaphysical enquiries, said Charles, has perhaps been more freely and frequently discussed than the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, opposed to the Free Agency of man. In this, as in innumerable other instances, by the misapplication of words, ideas have been involved in obscurity, and a mist has been raised about the perceptions of reason and the truths of Christianity, which a spirit of enquiry, blended with devotional feeling, should seek to dissipate. If we consider the matter in a simple point of view, without bewildering the erratic comprehensions of youth by abstract points of inferior moment, we shall be convinced that the subject itself is not placed

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so remotely in the gloom with which it has been surrounded. A very little attention to theology will induce us readily to admit the prescience of the Deity among his primary attributes. The past, the present, and the future, are alike present with him. 'I freely own,' says Mr. Locke, in one of his Letters, 'the weakness of my understanding; that though it be unquestionable, that there is Omnipotence and Omniscience in God our Maker, and though I cannot have a clearer perception of any thing than that I am free; yet I cannot make freedom in man consistent with Omnipotence and Omniscience in God. Still I am as freely persuaded of both, as of any truth I most firmly assent to.' It is obvious that in every instance there is a necessary connexion between cause and effect. The Almighty gives the faculties and the powers of man, but motives influence their exertions, and produce their effects. These motives arise from the immediate will of man, influenced by circumstances, but may be primarily traced to the great first cause of operation, or the divine agency, since

'Wisdom Infinite
Sits at the helm presiding, and directs
Each several movement to the purposed end.'

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Man proposes, but the Almighty disposes, is an observation, the truth of which is frequently verified in the common accidents of life.

The doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, said William, 'does not imply that our actions are involuntary, but merely that the will is regulated in all its determinations by certain fixed and definite laws.' That these laws were designed in the plan of Infinite Wisdom to promote the final and general good of the human species, is certain. 'Man is a being endowed with capacities for rendering himself happy, and communicating happiness to others; he is a subordinate but voluntary agent; he is a minister for good, filling a certain sphere in God's creation, acting by his agency, accomplishing his doings in every action of his life, and directed by his energy to that conduct which is most conducive to the production of lasting and universal happiness.'

According to these ideas, said George, can man be justly considered as a being who 'is answerable for the goodness or perversity of his heart and affections?'

Certainly, replied William. Qualities belong

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to man, although their origin may be traced to the Author of Nature. We cannot deny that 'plants vegetate or that stones gravitate, because their vegetation and gravitation proceed on fixed and invariable principles.' It does not follow, because we are compelled to assent to a self-evident proposition, as 'that a whole is greater than a part,' that we are incapable of judging. And because the will is subjected to immutable laws, does it follow that we cannot will? Man possesses a will, but it is influenced by motives, and these motives are occasioned by inclination, situation, and circumstances. The man who is hungry seeks for food—food is necessary to his existence; but he seeks it because he is hungry, and not because he considers that he is acting in conformity to the laws of nature.

As this doctrine, said Mrs. Osbourne, is not universally admitted, because it is not conceived from a superficial glance, nor clear even to the most enlarged minds, unless it has been properly investigated; I think it would be productive of considerable advantage to trace it to its origin, or the general division of nature into the material and moral world.

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A very happy thought, Madam! which I hope will enable us to make the subject appear perfectly comprehensible, and in unison with the most sacred truths and sublime consolations of Christianity.

The material world, we know, is governed by fixed and immutable laws, which admit of no variation, nor depend on any contingent circumstances. The laws of nature are invariably the same: if a stone be thrown by a hand in Mexico, it necessarily falls to the ground, the same as in England. The power of gravitation and attraction is precisely the same, although operating in different places. Every cause necessarily produces its effect: every effect is determined, and no other could result from the cause by which it was impelled. Whatever, then, are the changes or modifications of matter, they depend entirely on fixed laws; and as this is the government of the material world, the same may be applied to the moral world. Can we suppose that the Supreme Ruler regarded matter and disregarded mind?—that man is an ungoverned being, restrained by no laws, but as it were, let loose in the universe, unconnected and independent of every law to which every other work of the

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Creator is subordinate? Instinct is given to animals, reason to man; moral necessity is totally distinct from physical and absolute necessity. Man is not an automaton, nor a being impelled by instinct, but a rational agent, who acts in all things according to his own will: he deliberates, reasons, and chooses; but notwithstanding, he is subject to the laws which govern mind, in the same manner as the operations of nature depend on those which govern matter. 'He cannot act but according to his will; he cannot will but according to his desire; he cannot desire but according to what is agreeable or disagreeable in the objects perceived.' Man is a free agent, because he acts according to his will; but he must be a necessary agent, if his will is influenced by motives. I rise, I walk, I sit, I stand, as I please; but I am nevertheless influenced by motives, which incite me to these actions. I choose in conformity to my inclination, what appears calculated to promote my good: the action is mine; if I err in my choice, the error is also mine. I am at liberty to choose or reject, in which my liberty consists; but I choose agreeably to my inclination or perception; consequently there is a cause which influences my choice. If I wilfully choose the worse instead of the better, the fault is mine;

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or if I do so inadvertently, the blame must be imputed to my judgement, but the union between cause and effect still exists. "It is true, that the constitution of body and mind which God has bestowed on man, and the views he presents to him of good and evil, have a necessary influence over his conduct; and the Deity, by the application of certain motives and causes, can incline infallibly to that deportment which will contribute to his present and ultimate advantage."

I know no reflection so comfortable, said the Vicar, as that we are at all times under the immediate direction of a wise and good Being, who in all his dispensations consults our interest, and that our happiness is not left dependent on ourselves—on the capricious feeble exertions of frail man, but is unalterably secured by unerring wisdom and irresistible power. These sublime truths are incontestibly proved in the Sacred Writings; and although from a superficial survey we may be led to consider them as inconsistent with Infinite Benevolence, yet upon deliberate examination we shall find them strictly conformable with it; for undoubtedly 'the moral as well as the physical world is governed by fixed and definite laws;' and the changes which take

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place in each result from previous circumstances, and are designed, in the grand system of benevolence, to promote general and universal good.

This appears consistent with reason and observation, said George; but is it reconcilable with our ideas of the free agency of man?

Actions proceed immediately from man, replied Charles, although they may be traced primarily to the Deity. The exercise of wisdom and power belong to man, but their origin must be traced to Heaven. It is 'in God we live, move, and have our being;' it cannot therefore be concluded, that we do not live nor move at all.

I cannot conceive, said Henry, how the doctrine of necessity can be consistent with the morality of actions, or with the consciousness of liberty we possess, in our power to choose and reject, and to act in many instances exactly as we please.

It is wisely ordained by Providence, replied Charles, that in the constitution of man, his being a necessary agent is not perceptible to

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himself. In his general conduct, he acts in every instance 'with consciousness of spontaneosity;' hence the merit and demerit of his actions, his free agency, and the inducement to 'the exercise of that activity for which he was designed.' It is only by attending to the nature of things, by observing the train of causes and effects in the moral as in the material world, enlarging our perceptions by considering the general laws under which both are regulated, and comparing them with the attributes of the Deity and the truths of scripture, that we are able to form a correct judgment. The more enlarged our perceptions are on these subjects, the more clearly we shall perceive the connection and unity that subsists in the present system of things, the wisdom of the Great Regulator, and the means by which he works his will and diffuses happiness.

'We have not,' said William, 'a sense of power to act contrary to our inclination and choice.' It is true, I may act contrary to my inclination, but it is because I choose to do so, or am influenced by some motive.

'It is essential to Virtue or to Vice,' said Sir Edward, that all our actions be voluntary: the

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residence of Virtue is in the heart, and not in the will:' the will is influenced by motives arising from inclination, situation, and connexion. This consideration should make us invariably attentive to the operations of our own minds, and to the associations of others, and particularly of youth; since the preponderance of circumstances, the influence of example, and the baleful effects of pernicious intercourse, may contaminate the purest minds, and plunge those into the depth of vice who, having deviated from rectitude, had hearts yet open to conviction and capable of reformation, if by proper culture or judicious management they had been placed in a situation favourable to good impressions.

This remark, said Mrs. Osbourne, may be applied to the miserable beings of our sex, who, lost to themselves, their families, and shame, plunge into infamy, and spread the pestilence of their contagion, by the corruption of weak-minded youth, in families of worth and respectability; which might have been prevented, had these unhappy children of weakness and credulity been possessed of resources for the natural restlessness of the human mind that might divert them from rushing into a path of life

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no less injurious to society than to their eternal peace. These are national evils, that call aloud for redress; and until they are redressed, the amelioration of human misery cannot be effected.

To return to the subject of our conversation, said the Vicar, how pregnant with unspeakable comfort is the consideration, that no event can befal us which is not permitted by Infinite Goodness; and that however painful it may be to us for the time, it is designed by Ineffable Benevolence, if properly improved, to promote our advancement in virtue, and consequently in happiness. 'This view of things,' says the author of Christian Morals, 'and it is the view the enlightened Christian takes, tends to correct his anger against second causes, and affords him such an assurance that every occurrence will be over-ruled by Everlasting Love for his eventual good—inspires him with such holy confidence in the promises of the Gospel, that he acquires a repose of spirit, not merely from compelled submission to authority, but from rational acquiescence in goodness. He feels that his confirmed belief in this universal agency is the only thing that can set his heart at rest, still its perturbations, moderate its impatience, sooth its terrors,

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confirm its faith, preserve its peace, or, when it has suffered a momentary suspension, restore it.'

The firm conviction of this important truth can alone enable us to pursue our journey of life with calm composure, unruffled by its tempests, and unannoyed by its bellowing surges.

I am convinced that this delightful confidence carries within itself the seeds of happiness, said Sophronia; but does it not border on presumption to suppose, that the Omnipotent Creator will condescend to regard such creatures as we are? When we contemplate his power, are we not lost in the vast display with which we are every where surrounded?

Let us beware, replied the Vicar, of restricting the goodness of Perfect Wisdom and Incomprehensible Power. It is true that we are lost in its contemplation, as obvious to our present faculties; but wherefore did he exert his power? was it not to diffuse happiness? O my children! let us not presume to limit the operations of infinite benevolence to the measure of our finite capacities. Be assured, God wills our happiness; let us not, then, murmur at the means by which he leads to its attainment. If he would perfect us

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for bliss, he must perfect us in virtue, and this can only be by suffering. 'Are ye not made perfect by suffering?' and 'is not gold purified before it arrives at the standard of perfect gold?' So must man be tried by suffering, before he arrives at the perfection of virtue which his nature is capable of attaining.

'Providence, in his wise arrangements,' says Mrs. More, 'does not exclude the operation of subordinate causes and motives, but allows them to assist the greater, and thereby to work his will. We leave to God the direction of the natural world, yet we frequently make little scruple to take the government of the moral world into our own hands. We consent to his ruling matter; but we reluctantly allow that he governs mind. He does not, it is true, by an arbitrary compulsion of men's minds, rob them of that freedom by which they offend him, nor by a force on their liberty prevent those sins and follies by the arbitrary hindrance of which he would convert rational beings into mechanical creatures; but he turns their sins and follies to such uses, that while by voluntary commission of them they are bringing down destruction upon their own heads, they are not impeding his purposes.'

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'God's view of all men and all events throughout all ages, is one clear, distinct, quick, simultaneous view. Infinite Knowledge pierces through all distance at a glance, and collects all ages in the focus of the existing moment.'

What a grand and perspicuous view of the moral system of the universe do these ideas convey! How indifferent do they make us to the pleasures of time and sense—how patient under affliction, and how submissive under every dispensation of Divine Providence! Severe as are many of the trials of life, when viewed through the medium of the universal agency, the Great First Cause of operation, how comparatively trifling do they become!—how forbearing and forgiving are we to others, how resigned to the temporal evils that surround us, and how contented with the situation in life in which an all-wise Providence has been pleased to place us! and at the same time, from the conviction that no effect can be produced without its previous cause, how attentive should it make us to the operations of our own minds, to the improvement, and the proper direction and regulation of our hearts, inclinations and affections!

No end can be attained, said Sir Edward,

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without attending to its efficient means. If the husbandman would reap plenteous crops, he must carefully plough his fields; nor is that alone sufficient: he must afterward sow the grain; and all this depends upon his own exertions. It is true, he must possess health and ability to do this; but unless it be done, a harvest cannot be obtained. It is undoubtedly the same in the intellectual and moral as in the natural world: means must be employed, or the end cannot be obtained. If we would be conversant in languages, we must study words; if we would obtain general knowledge, things must engage our attention; if we would properly reflect and judge, we must observe and deduce consequences; and thus in every respect, if we would advance in moral virtue, we must recur to the means. If we desire to be loved by our relations and associates, we must be gentle, obliging, affable, kind—if respected, amiable, benevolent, and just—if feared, harsh, austere, and imperious. We cannot in any instance separate the cause from the effect. If virtue animate our souls and influence our conduct, our actions will correspond, constitute our own happiness, and contribute proportionably to the good of others; and so progressively, as the whole consists of

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parts, from insignificant individuality to general well being. This consideration alone would evince the importance of a good education, and the advantages which await the practice of the moral and social virtues; since however contracted the sphere of individual usefulness may be, it yet has its sphere, and its effects may extend to a subsequent period, generating the happiness of thousands.

In every point of view in which we consider the cultivation of the social feelings, the moral virtues, and the intellectual powers, the happiness of the individual is materially combined with their attainment, and the good of posterity with their extensive dissemination. The truly philanthropic mind considers no exertion too great, to promote the extension of knowledge and the advancement of the happiness of mankind. Let us then

> Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
> But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice;
> Implore his aid: in his decision rest,
> Secure whate'er he gives, he gives the best.
>
> JOHNSON.

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CONVERSATION IV.

On the Causes of Character, its influence on Society, and as productive of good to the individual.

IN addition to the classification of the mind, said William, we proposed an investigation of character, of its causes, nature, and attainment; its diversity, its influence, its power to promote the amelioration of existing evils, the happiness of the individual, the good of society, and as likely to produce a greater degree of happiness in a future state of being. This is a widely extended field for observation; but I propose that we merely enquire into the origin, nature and effects of character, leaving its more particular investigation for greater wisdom and experience.

The subject, William! was chosen by yourself, said George, and therefore I think it incumbent

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upon you to follow it, under the various heads you have named.

I am of the same opinion, said Sophronia. The discussion will be highly interesting, replete with pleasure and instruction; and I therefore propose that it be investigated in all its branches.

I second Sophronia's proposition, said Charles.

And I too, said most of the young people.

The subject having been commenced, said Sir Edward, we may as well proceed in its examination, as commence any other discussion.

I most willingly acquiesce with your united wishes, replied William, and particularly as they are exactly in unison with my own. But expecting opposition from the ladies, I concluded that the most likely way to obtain my end would be to place an obstacle before them, which I knew they would be anxious to surmount. And in the first place, allow me to enquire what is the cause of this strange perversity in the female character, which loves to combat difficulties, and despises the plain unobstructed road?

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I thought, said Sophronia, we were to have a philosophical dissertation, and not a philippic.

Why really Sophronia, it would be applying philosophy to a strange purpose, if we were to endeavour thereby to explore the character of the fair sex. But as I do not wish the subject to be glanced over by arguments light as woman's words, let us in the first place examine the general causes of character among the human race universally.

The first grand cause, said Charles, must certainly originate in Nature; but nature loves uniformity, and does not occasion the vast difference observable in the characters of mankind; therefore this diversity must be imputed to another cause. We will first consider the diversity, and the general causes from whence it proceeds. The characters of mankind, as suggested in a former conversation, may be divided into physical, occasioned by climate; natural, or peculiar to nations; intellectual, proceeding from education; moral, resulting from habit, and theological, which admits of various divisions, and perhaps would more properly come under the term sectarial, as our peculiar religious sentiments have

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a preponderating influence in the formation of our general character. The immutable laws of nature are every where the same; they may be regulated in their operations by the influence of subordinate and secondary causes, but proceed from the same invariable principles; hence there is little difference in man naturally, except with respect to colour, form, &c. The organization of his body and the faculties of his mind admit of little variation. The vast diversity discernible in mankind proceeds from other causes, and may be imputed to subsequent events, which co-operating with the peculiarities of situation and the tendencies of education, produce the material differences that exist in the human species.

The national characters of mankind, said Sir Edward, open to us so wide a field, that its immediate investigation would probably involve us in confusion, and prevent a proper share of attention to other subjects; therefore we shall do well to postpone this enquiry, and proceed to observations on the intellectual character.

The intellectual character of mankind has been considered, said Charles, in the classification

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we have already attempted. Its origin has been traced to nature, but its effects were acknowledged to proceed from circumstances, which by their co-operating influence produce a greater or a less degree of mental expansion. From the combination of these effects proceeds intellectual character; and this character is varied according to the exaltation, mediocrity, or debasement of the powers peculiar to the individual; but as

> 'The human mind ne'er knows a state of rest,
> Bad tends to worse, and better leads to best;'

We should continually aim to advance our intellectual standard, and particularly as our moral conduct and general happiness are intimately connected with our mental character. Well may we say, with that ornament to English literature and the female sex, Mrs. Carter, in her Ode to Wisdom,

> 'To me thy better gifts impart,
> Each moral beauty of the heart,
> By studious thought refined;
> For wealth, the smiles of glad content;
> For power, its amplest, best extent,
> An empire o'er the mind.'

If all our modern ladies resembled Mrs. Carter, said George, we should not so frequently hear

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philosophical dissertations and observations on the sciences, uttered in language that evinces a very superficial acquaintance with the subjects discussed, less for the amusement or edification of others, than for their own gratification.

If the ladies to whom you allude, said Mrs. Osbourne, possessed Mrs. Carter's knowledge and talents, they would not be without her modesty, nor probably her other amiable qualities. Raise them to her intellectual standard, and you will adorn them with similar qualifications. We cannot expect persons of the fourth class to possess the same attainments and general character with those of the third; nor the inferior genera of the third to be equal to the superior orders of the same class.

Will you oblige me, Charles! said Harriet, by naming the class in which you conceive Mrs. Carter deserves to be enrolled?

Without hesitation, replied Charles, I should place her in my second order or subdivision of the second class.

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Do not you think she might claim the first rank?

Perhaps she might; but I do not feel myself authorised to place her in my first order.

Did she not possess every requisite for the highest order of your second class? Do not her classical attainments merit it, and her virtue, piety, and eminent endowments entitle her to it?

True; but as I have considered the greater number of our geniuses entitled only to the first rank in the third class, anxious as I am to oblige the ladies, I cannot place Mrs. Carter at the head of my second. They must be contented with the place assigned her, or that her name shall descend a step lower.

Allow me to enquire whom you would place at the head of your second class?

That mighty master of the English tongue, Samuel Johnson, is perhaps as justly entitled to this rank as any other.

And in what class would you place Lord Bacon?

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When we consider the darkness of the time in which he lived, his discoveries and improvements in philosophy and the sciences certainly entitle him to a place in the first class, or amongst my first-rate geniuses; but in this case I must have a subdivision, as his name cannot be enrolled with that of the immortal Newton: he must be of the second order, or at least in an inferior rank to that of Newton.

This classification might furnish us with a very pretty species of amusement, said George; and we might arrange mind as soldiers in a regiment; but I fear that few persons would be pleased with the rank assigned them. The fourth class would so greatly preponderate in number, that some of them would consider themselves entitled to a higher rank.

They must be satisfied with that which they enjoy in the world, replied Charles, since persons of this class generally preside over fashion, decide on the cut of a coat or the formation of a bonnet, arrange the etiquettes of ceremonial life, giving laws which wiser persons follow only when needful to avoid the charge of singularity; and

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simpler ones from the desire to resemble their superiors.

One peculiarity, said Sir Edward, attached to persons who frequently rank high in the intellectual and moral world, is singularity. This should be carefully avoided, as it relates to things indifferent and insignificant in themselves. While we are in the world, we should conform ourselves to the fashions of the world, so as to avoid being diverted from objects of more important pursuit by the ridicule of those who are our inferiors in moral and mental character.

Things of higher moment, that respect our principles or perceptions of right, should on no account be relinquished. In this case, singularity is not only justifiable but praiseworthy.

Moral character, said Charles, cannot justly be said to proceed from habit. Custom may stamp, but does not originate the impression. A moral character must have well-regulated affections, subordinate passions, and general propriety of conduct; and this, to be genuine, must proceed from religion: without the impression of this principle, it cannot support trial and temptation. If founded only upon habit and a

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concatenation of favourable circumstances, it sinks before the blast of adversity, or yields to the soft enticements of delusive pleasure.

By the term theological or sectarial character, said the Vicar, may be inferred the peculiar characteristics which distinguish the various denominations of Christian professors. These proceed from the bias of the mind in early life, from education and connexions. As the progress of intellect advances, liberality of sentiment will increase, distinctions will cease, or become lost in the glorious appellation of Christian. All who are anxious to exalt the name of 'Him before whom every knee shall bow,' will seek to promote the cause of good or true religion in the world; the light of truth shall dispel the mists of error, prejudice, and ignorance; knowledge shall gild with her sacred irradiations the happy recipients of divine love, who, uniting in adoration of the source and centre of all worlds, will exclaim with Cowper,

> From Thee is all that soothes the life of man,
> His high endeavour and his glad success,
> His strength to suffer and his will to serve.
> But, O thou bounteous giver of all good!
> Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown:
> Give what thou wilt, without thee we are poor,
> And with thee, rich, take what thou wilt away.

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That the happiness of the individual, in this life, said Charles, depends greatly upon the degree of character he attains, is certain. External circumstances, pregnant as they frequently are with suffering and distress, can only impart pain in proportion as they have power to affect the mind. This consideration should make us particularly anxious to direct it properly and regulate its impulses, to

> Pour forth our fervors for a heathful mind,
> Obedient passions, and a will resign'd;
> For love, which scarce collective man can fill,
> For patience sovereign o'er transmitted ill;
> For faith that, panting for a happier seat,
> Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat.
> These, goods for man, the laws of Heaven ordain,
> These goods he gives, who gives the pow'r to gain;
> With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
> And makes the happiness she does not find.
>
> JOHNSON.

The characters of men, said Sir Edward, depend greatly upon their bodily temperament, as proceeding from nature; but if nature be allowed to prevail, of what utility is a good education, or virtuous principles?

> Ah! tell me not 'tis Passion's powerful sway,
> 'Tis Passion's voice which youth must still obey:
> When Reason guides, the impetuous passions fly,
> Curb'd Vice recedes, as Virtue bids them die.

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Nothing can be a greater preventative against the improvement of character, said the Vicar, than to suppose it allowable to yield to any prevailing propensity. The conduct enjoined by reason, morality, and religion, is precisely the same. The motives which excite it are different, and the two former cannot produce the happiness of the individual equally with the latter; as it is religion alone that can fill the soul of man, and supply him with an inexhaustible source of felicity, independently of the fortuitous incidents of life.

The characters of mankind, said Sir Edward, have, I believe, been divided into 'the phlegmatic, the sanguine, the choleric, and the melancholy. The first are described as cold, timid, suspicious, deliberate, philosophic; the second as warm, presuming, generous, vehement, pathetic; the third as irrascible, severe, bold, discerning; the fourth as a compound of these three, refined and heightened by imagination;' to which, in the opinion of Aristotle, the ordinary class of geniuses belong. I consider Charles's classification much more accurate, and more capable of improvement; and should be happy if, at a future period, some friend to intellectual

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culture and the well-being of the human species, would examine if it be really built upon the basis of truth, point out with candour and liberality its defects, and enlarge it with observations calculated to improve our contemporaries and benefit posterity.

I must confess, said the Vicar, that my son has evinced some ingenuity in the system which he has suggested: it certainly possesses the merit of originality; and if calculated to produce no other good effect on society than enlisting the principle of self-love (which prevails more or less in every person) in the cause of intellect and the advancement of virtue, he will at least have the satisfaction arising from the endeavour to serve his Maker in such an attempt to benefit his fellow-creatures.

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CONVERSATION V.

On the Diversity of Character discernible in the Sexes, and their general influence on each other.

HAVING in our last evening's conversation, said William, enquired into the causes of character, the present object of our attention should be its nature and attainment.

The nature of character, said Charles, relates to the acquisition of those virtues which are of individual attainment, and constitutes rank in the moral world. They naturally place the possessor in a higher or a lower degree of eminence, in proportion to the general evidence of the existence of the active virtues which adorn mind, and the passive which grace conduct. Whether the acquisition of the active, or the possession of the passive virtues, be of the

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greatest importance to man individually or generally, might afford interesting matter for discussion, were we disposed to analyze their nature. The active virtues might probably be considered as most beneficial to the community, and the passive to the individual.

To constitute a great character, said Sir Edward, no virtue should be allowed to preponderate. Courage which is not restrained by prudence, will degenerate into rashness—meekness, into apparent cowardness or pusillanimity. The love of country may inspire zeal inimical to its internal peace and well-being; economy may become parsimony, and liberality degenerate into extravagance. The perfection of character, and of the arts of life, depend greatly upon the happy medium which keeps the whole in equilibrium, and from whence the harmony and beauty of both proceed.

Moral beauty, said the Vicar, arises from moral virtue. Its effects are conspicuous even to the most superficial observer. The harmony resulting from virtue is perfect in all its parts, and constitutes the unity of the whole, equally with that of any system, the regularity of which

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may be more easily discerned. The unity and beauty of virtue is perceptible in proportion to the attention we bestow on its nature, and our general observations of mankind.

The most obvious diversity of character, said William, arising from nature, independently of education and association, is that which is discernible in the sexes. This diversity is most wisely ordained by the Creator; and the equilibrium of nature is admirably supported in the difference which it occasions. The male possesses a greater degree of strength, consequently of courage—the female of weakness, consequently of timidity. Their characters in this respect proceed entirely from physical constitution, or from the ordinance of Providence, in order that, combined with their natural influence upon each other, the courage of the man might be restrained from ferocity and tempered and softened by the gentleness and timidity of the female, while her weakness is supported by the strength and animated by the courage of the male.

History, said Sophronia, furnishes us with frequent instances of women overcoming the

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diffidence and timidity of their sex, and succeeding in exploits which would have done honour to the greatest statesmen or warriors of the age in which they lived; and to what cause may this be imputed?

To their minds being inspired by some powerful motive, which enabled them to overcome the weakness of their nature and the characteristic timidity of their sex.

Does the goodness of the motive in general constitute the goodness of the action?

In general it does.

Is the greatness of effect in the moral, as in the natural world, always proportionate to its cause?

Certainly.

It then follows that great designs can only be conceived by minds of great powers, and executed only in proportion to the active energies of the individual.

Without doubt, replied William.

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If, therefore, said Sophronia, woman be capable of conceiving equally great designs with man, she possesses equal intellectual faculties; if capacity for executing them, equal powers of action; and if incited by a motive which enables the weak to compete with the strong, she is in this respect superior. In what, then, consists the inferiority of woman?

If you call in the aid of logical demonstration, Sophronia! it will be only fair for us to carry on the contest upon equal ground; and then we shall soon see in whom superiority resides.

It would be both unfair and ungenerous, replied Sophronia, to attack us with weapons which you will not allow us to wield.

I should be sorry, Sophronia! to see your sex armed with them, said Sir Edward. Believe me, they would not add to your charms or your graces. Intelligence in woman is in every respect desirable. A virtuous, amiable, well-informed female, must always be an agreeable and pleasing companion; but nothing can be more disgusting than the supercilious airs of a learned

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one. Much as I admire good sense and general information, I would rather live in a desert with a female who possessed only the former quality, than enjoy the luxuries of life with a paragon of learning, who could forget her station and the modesty and diffidence of her sex, in ostentatiously displaying her scholastic acquisitions. Women should cultivate their minds, to call forth the energies and powers of nature, and to secure their influence over our sex beyond the transitory dominion of youthful charms, that vanish like a vapour before the sun of intellect—which, instead of losing its lustre, acquires new radiance in the meridian of life, disperses the gloomy clouds that overshadow it, gilds with its graceful and majestic rays the evening of our days, and wafts our souls, on beams of blessedness, to heaven!

It is deficiency of mental endowments, said Mrs. Osbourne, that restrains the influence and shackles the powers of females. Talents have a more powerful and permanent ascendancy over those of the other sex who are capable of feasting upon intellectual food, than the transitory charms of youth and beauty, and I am sorry to add, than sometimes too of worth, and the silent

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domestic virtues which constitute the intrinsic value of the female character. This was the case with some of the ancients, who neglected their wives, whom they considered merely as upper servants or necessary apendages of household furniture, and sought the company and conversation of the courtezans, who alone had the opportunity or were allowed the privilege of cultivating their minds. But the man who prefers talents to worth, accomplishments to virtue, and the gratification derived from the society of those who may amuse and charm his leisure moments, but have no right to deprive the more deserving though less accomplished female of the benefit she might derive from his conversation and society, deserves to be, as he frequently is, the dupe of the talents he admired, the derision of the world, and the pity of the liberal-minded. The ambrosial feast and nectarial cup are indeed delicious; but we must beware lest the hand that presents, impregnate them with poison, or that the flowers which are strewed in our path do not conceal the adder that would entwine round our breast and inflict a wound that might imbitter our days, and deprive us of tranquillity and happiness.

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The female character, said Mrs. Wentworth, is a subject of the highest importance, not only to the happiness of individuals, the well-being of families, and the promotion of general good, as it is capable of effecting the amelioration of evils which, by a proper exercise of its influence, might be effectively redressed; but until the qualities of the heart and mind are considered of greater importance than the acquisition of accomplishments which, although peculiarly appropriated to females, and calculated to adorn life, yet are not to be the basis or end of education, the female character cannot attain the dignity which it ought to possess. Accomplishments should be the ornaments, not the pillars of the superstructure raised by education; which should be erected upon a foundation sufficiently firm to enable it to endure the storms of adversity, as well as the dazzling sun-shine of prosperity.

In surveying the plan of Providence in the immaterial as well as the material world, as obvious to our present powers of perception, the unity, harmony and consistency of the designs of the Great Regulator are clearly conspicuous, and admirably calculated to promote the good of the

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whole. The happiness of intelligent creatures cannot be perfect, unless they possess scope for the unfolding and developement of those powers and faculties which remain unexpanded—unless impelled to exertion. It is not possible for the influence of woman to prevail in its full force, or indeed in the degree which I am persuaded the Creator intended it should act, to promote the perfect happiness of both sexes, unless the female possess that portion of mental cultivation which would raise her to an equality in the scale of intelligence with the male. The temporary influence which arises from inclination, passion, or any less durable impression than an attachment whose basis is the mind, must vanish with the principle which gave it birth. On the contrary, time, which destroys attachments built on foundations too weak to resist its power, cements and confirms those which ennoble our nature. This consideration only should induce particular attention to the cultivation of intellect in females.

How degrading is it to the intellectual capacities of women, said Mrs. Osbourne, that young men, of superior mental endowments, should incessantly complain of their frivolity and deficiency in similar attainments, and on their introduction

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into life, seek female society only to polish their own manners, without any reference to the improvement of their minds or even with a supposition that from such an intercourse they might acquire that refinement and delicacy which it is the peculiar prerogative of females to impart! It is by observations on the conduct of women in general, that so many men are led to imbibe a contempt for the sex—a contempt which is as unmerited by the whole, as I am sorry to say it is deservedly incurred by the greater part. If men form their opinion of the female character from intercourse with the frivolous, the dissipated, and the vain, their judgment should be confined to such characters alone, and not applied indiscriminately. They should remember, that merit is of a silent unobtrusive nature, it loves retirement and obscurity, and therefore should not be sought in the circles of dissipation, or the scenes of frivolity and fashion.

The female character, said Sir Edward, must always be considered by wise legislators and true lovers of their country, as a subject of the highest importance. 'Franklin,' says a modern author, 'was too sensible of the ascendancy of beauty, not to consider the sex as the basis of

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social happiness and the guardians of public manners. In all his writings, he strenuously endeavoured to support their influence, by exciting them to adorn their graces with the irresistible attraction of reason and the seducing charms of affability and virtue.' Polish the manners of the women, and you proportionably refine those of the men; elevate the sentiments of the females, and you exalt the character of the males; debase the one, and you degrade the other. A Petrarch, or a Louis XIV. could not have been inspired with an indissoluble attachment, had not the objects of their affection been women of superior worth; nor would Beatrice have been immortalised as the conductress of Dante into Paradise, had she not been superior to the generality of her sex.

She certainly would not, had she not been so in the Poet's estimation, said William.

Every attachment must originate in similarity, said Charles. It has been asserted, that we love ourselves in others: it is certainly true, that we admire, respect and esteem qualifications in others only as we are capable of appreciating qualities that inspire those sensations. Had Petrarch,

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Dante, or Louis, possessed minds of the common order, Laura would never have been celebrated, Beatrice immortalised, nor would a Maintenon have directed the cabinet of the greatest prince in Europe.

I am happy, Charles! said the Vicar, to find you an advocate for the rational influence of the fair sex. Nothing can be more inimical to the happiness of life, than the mistaken notions which are frequently imbibed on this head. A man who is guided and led by woman, independent of his better judgment and superior advantages, merits contempt for his weakness and folly; but he whose susceptible and polished mind is inspired by a lively and tender affection for a female deserving his attention and regard, has a soul formed in nature's finest mould: he can enjoy sensations of the most exquisite and refined nature, such as the unexpanded mind of apathetic feeling cannot admit, nor the restrained perceptions of uncultivated intellect discover; and as this influence preponderates in minds of superior endowments, in proportion to their intellectual capacity and mental susceptibility, so do the power, privileges, and national prerogatives of women increase progressively with the civiliza-

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tion and refinement of the country to which they belong. As knowledge and intellect diffuse around the beams of truth, so shall woman be emancipated from the shackles of ignorance, and in every nation, according to the advances of reason and the progress of religion, assume the place in the order of creation for which she was designed. Man shall then no longer degrade his nature, by treating her who was formed to be his companion and friend, as a being of inferior order, incapable of participating with him in the privileges of rationality.

In civilized society, said Mrs. Wentworth, the influence of the sexes is mutual but not equal; since it preponderates, at least in early life, in favour of females. It therefore behoves them, particularly, to cultivate those virtues and attractions which will secure their power beyond the reign of youth and beauty, and give to them the friendship and esteem of their husbands, when their personal charms shall have sunk into age, and the elegance of their manners be lost in decrepitude. Equality of mind is the only solid basis of permanent affection—generosity and gratitude its animating springs—mutual good offices its support—kind indulgence its cherisher,

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and friendship and unbounded confidence, its never-ceasing charm—

> True bliss, if man may reach it, is composed
> Of hearts in union mutually disclosed;
> And, farewell else all hope of pure delight!
> Those hearts should be reclaim'd, renew'd, upright.
>
> COWPER.

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CONVERSATION VI.

On the tendency of Incident and Association in the formation of the Moral and Intellectual Character.

ASSOCIATION, said Charles, has a very preponderating influence in the formation of the moral and mental character; but the same associations cannot draw forth the same energies, unless equal abilities be possessed; they must vary in the effects they produce according to their union or co-operation with the propensities of nature and the intellectual capacity of the individual. In this observation, I more peculiarly apply the term association to external operations, or the general tendency of incident.

When we refer to the formation of character, said Sir Edward, we should recollect that, properly speaking, character is never formed.

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It cannot continue invariably the same, as it progressively advances to or recedes from the standard of excellence which our nature is capable of attaining. The associations of early life must necessarily have a very prevailing effect upon the moral and mental character of youth. When principles are generated and habits are formed, they can only act conjointly or in unison with previous impressions. Hence improper associations are not so likely to be injurious to youth at a later as at an earlier period, as they may be counterpoised by observation, reflection, and judgment.

Improper associations, said the Vicar, are at all times to be dreaded as the bane of human happiness, they have not the same influence on

> " The noble few, who here unbending stand
> Beneath life's pressure,"

As on those weak and pliant beings who have not resolution to resist the influence of example, but in defiance of their reason and better judgment, suffer themselves to glide gently down the stream of delusive pleasure, until they are carried away by the torrent of heartless dissipation, and engulphed in the abyss of vice and misery.

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Some minds, said Mrs. Osbourne, may be justly compared to the stately cedar: the more they are oppressed by external circumstances, the deeper they sink in the rich luxuriant soil of genuine virtue. Others, like the slender poplar, bend, lose their grace and beauty, and droop into deformity. Thus in regard to the mind, the dignified soul of genuine sensibility, whose strong intellectual powers, warm feelings, and generous impulses, indicate the superiority of natural powers which is generally designated genius, when established upon the firm basis of sacred principle, disdains to stoop to the degradation of vice, however impelled by external circumstances. Far otherwise is it with the weak, the wavering mind: unaccustomed to employ its energies, it is influenced by example and becomes contaminated by its associations; like the pliant poplar, it bows beneath the blast of adversity, for want of strength to resist the impetuosity of the storm, or even to withstand the mildest breeze.

Circumstances, said Sir Edward, make men great. The seeds of ability may remain in embryo, unless opportunity present them with the means of culture. Minds of superior energies have always existed, but they have not always

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been brought into action. Had not Charles, the Dauphin of France, been in danger of losing his crown, the Maid of Orleans would not have figured upon the theatre of Europe. If Milton had not been enamoured with his Italian incognita, his mind would not have been expanded in visiting the ancient seats of classic literature, nor his language harmonised by the dulcet strains of Italian poesy. Nor would Cromwell have usurped the sceptre of England, had not fortuitous occurrences opened a path for his ambition.

Whatever may be the effects of the combination of different causes, said George, and the tendencies of incident, the propensities of nature will in a great measure prevail. Nature excites, but circumstances call to action. The love of literature predominated at an early period in the breast of Johnson; but his subsequent necessities compelled him to labour in the path he had chosen. More to his wants than to his inclination, are we indebted for his Dictionary, his Rambler, and his Rasselas.

The enthusiasm which the display of superior talents is apt to excite, said William, in the breasts of contemporaries or successors, is pro-

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ductive of very beneficial effects to society at large. Superiority in any respect excites admiration, and leads to imitation; and if this enlarge the sphere of individual usefulness, good must of course ensue. This idea, in the language of the ancients, must be fraught with consolation to the manes of a Chatterton or a White, although they may have been suffered to depart from the world without receiving from its gratitude, a sufficient supply of the wants of nature to permit a longer residence therein.

Those who seek to benefit society, said the Vicar, should look for a nobler recompense than its gratitude can afford; as it must be confessed, that its greatest benefactors have in general received the most scanty compensation. As this, however, was the case with our Divine Master, his servants should not complain, but boldly and steadily proceed in the race of usefulness, endeavouring to display truth in her native lustre, divested from the shackles of prejudice, the mists of error, and the delusions of superstition; remembering that He who, by the concurrence of circumstances, has called them to perform the task assigned them in his providence, can enable them to contribute their part towards the exter-

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mination of ignorance and vice, the advancement of truth, and consequently the increase of happiness; and that at the hour of their dissolution, they will enjoy the exquisite reflection that they have not lived in vain, but invariably endeavoured, to the utmost of their power, to promote the diminution of evil and the dissemination of good. Happy recipients of so sacred a trust! May the ministers of the glorious truths of Christianity, the children of science, the instructors of youth, and the friends of mankind, consider that in their respective avocations of usefulness, they participate in the celestial prerogative of ineffable benevolence, and evince their love to God, in their zeal to promote the happiness of man.

When we consider that the associations of early life, said Sir Edward, have so powerful an ascendency in the formation of the future character, we should be particularly attentive to the connexions of youth; as this is the time when the ductile mind, like wax, readily admits every impression. Great difference is observable between age and youth: in early life, the feelings are warm, tender, susceptible, generous; but intercourse with the world deadens and blunts our sensibility:

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we become, in a great degree, callous as well to our own sensations as to the sufferings of others. This does not so much occur when the lively impulses of benevolence expand the heart, and the social affections have been kept in full play, as with persons whose situation in life is peculiarly pregnant with sources of pain. But in this case they should beware lest, even in their younger years, misanthropy usurp their breasts, and prevent the best feelings of their nature from expanding, and concentrating in benevolence and love.

From the social principle implanted in the heart, said Mrs. Osbourne, our happiness is necessarily made greatly dependant upon others. It is the violation of this principle which occasions the stings of ingratitude, or gives power to the venom of malevolence. The moral character cannot be injured in itself by the malignity of falsehood or the breath of calumny, but it may in the opinion of others; and this causes the pain which slander has the power to inflict. To seek happiness in external sensible objects, is not the characteristic of a wise man; and yet, where is the man of sensibility and refinement who can shut up his heart and confine his enjoy-

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ments to his own breast, or who even desires to do do so; for

A solitary blessing few can find:
Our joys with those we love are enterwined;
And he whose helpful tenderness removes
The obstructing thorn which wounds the breast he loves,
Smooths not another's rugged path alone,
But scatters roses to adorn his own.

HANNAH MORE.

The social feeling, said Charles, may, I think, be considered to exist not according to its general developement or display, but to its more particular residence. The principle may perhaps be combined with the intellectual powers of the individual, equally with the general evidence of the prevalence of the other mental capacities; and in fact, I believe that in superior minds the social feeling resides in a superior degree, although circumstances may not always admit its display. It is the characteristic of the strong feeling, denominated genius, to seek

The sacred hour when, from the world retired,
The soul ascends on contemplation's wing;

And to fly from the busy scenes of life, its vain pursuits and idle dissipations, for enjoyment in silence and solitude, of more exquisite gratifica-

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tions than the pomp of courts could communicate. Here, in the tranquility of retirement, he finds

A philosophic calmness reigns around,
And Reason points to Contemplation's bower;
Contentment strews with flowers the fertile ground,
And Peace and Silence consecrate the hour.
Wafted on warm Devotion's wing,
Ah! let his soul to Heaven ascend;
May white-robed Peace her mantle bring,
And sacred Truth array her friend.

But this attachment to solitude does not exist because the social principle is not implanted in the breast, but only because its possessor seldom meets with similarity of sentiment and congeniality of disposition—

The feast of intellect, the sense refined,
The rich repast, the rapture of the mind,
The blaze of talent, and the blest display
Of virtues, radiant as the dawning day,
Kindling in each the sympathetic glow,
That yields the bliss congenial spirits know.

As we are rational beings, said Lady Berine, formed for the enjoyment of social intercourse, we should beware of encouraging those habits that may render us averse to or unfit for our station in life. Man may more effectively serve

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his Maker in society than in solitude, and do more good to his fellow-creatures by his example than by his meditations.

Happy is it for those persons, said the Vicar, whose affections, if I may so speak, entwine around and centre in their proper focus—whose devotional feelings are warmed and animated by the purest, the most unbounded love towards Him whose love is manifested throughout creation! In Him may all the best feelings of our nature concentrate, without fear of disappointment, mortification, or pain; enjoying in our nearer approximation to the source of uncreated light, additional and still increasing happiness and felicity!

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CONVERSATION VII.

Observations on the Situation of Man in the Scale of the Universe. Remarks on the present System of National Education.

WHEN I reflect upon man abstractedly, said Charles Wentworth, and consider him either individually or collectively, I am oppressed with sensations that reduce me to insignificance, and fill my soul with fear, least in the immensity of the universe I should be over-looked by the Deity, or regarded only as a mere atom in the balance of creation. This idea occasions me so much pain, that but for the consolations of religion, I should sink into utter despair.

And happy, my dear Charles! is it for us, said the Vicar, that we have such a resource. An intimate acquaintance with the Deity in his

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works naturally augments our perceptions of his greatness and power, but at the same time, reduces us almost into our primeval nothingness; and were it not for the assurances of Revelation, we should be overwhelmed in the consciousness of our own insignificance. But not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father; and that we are of more value than many sparrows is one of the sacred consolations of holy writ.

This is a sensation, said Sir Edward, which proves a reflecting and strongly perceptive mind. One cause of humility being inseparably connected with superiority of intellect, is the just perceptions which it excites of our nature and our situation in the grand scale of the creation. When we consider the rank which our system holds in the universe—that it is merely one, amongst the thousands of existing sources of heat and life with which it is every where surrounded—that if our sun and its attendant planets were annihilated, no chasm would thereby be occasioned in the immensity of space—when such reflections arise from the view of our system considered as a whole, what must be those that proceed from the idea of separating

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its parts, and considering the earth as a planetary body, revolving around and depending upon it for light, heat, and existence. It has been said, that a man who is acquainted with the nature of the solar system and heavenly bodies, must necessarily possess religious feeling, and that

"An undevout astronomer is mad;"

And it may with equal propriety be asserted, that one possessed of pride never existed; as scientific knowledge must extirpate pride from the heart, in proportion as it expels ignorance from the understanding.

When we view ourselves by the descending gradations of nature, as united to the insect which we thoughtlessly tread under our feet, pride receives another shock; and a sovereign of the earth, did such a person exist, would be compelled to acknowledge, that pride indeed was not made for man.

Some very ingenious suppositions have been made, said William, by persons of speculative habits, respecting the inhabitants of other planetary bodies; but as this must ever remain conjecture to man, our contemplations upon the subject can prove of no other utility than to

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enlarge our perceptions of Creative Power. I must confess, the supposition of a dangerous writer of the last century, is ingenious enough, in imagining that the stature and intellect of the inhabitants of the different planets correspond with their diameter in proportion to the standard of man upon earth.

All our surmises on these subjects, said the Vicar, must be futile. As far as they are connected with reason, analogy, and our general knowledge of invisible power and unbounded benevolence, we may reasonably indulge them: in every other respect they can only proceed from imagination; though for my own part, I would as readily suppose myself to be the only human being upon earth, as restrict the creative operations of the Deity to angels and men. There are, without doubt, innumerable degrees of intelligent beings, or of intellectual percipience. Let us be satisfied with the rank we hold, assured that when the myriads of spheres now revolving in the immensity of space shall have yielded their inhabitants, we shall perceive ourselves united by regular gradations to the source of the intelligent, as we now do to the minutest atom of the natural world; and when

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in that grand concourse of etherial beings who, adoring the source of happiness in the unveiled radiance of the Omnipresent Deity, the faithful servants of the Eternal God, from every created sphere, shall approach by nearer degrees, according to their utility and faithfulness, toward their divine Master, and receive from his approbation an exalted recompense for their sufferings while doing his will and glorifying his name, happy indeed will those be who are found faithful; for as one star differeth from another in glory, so shall they in the kingdom of heaven! This is an allowable, a meritorious, a praise-worthy ambition. Oh! that many of the inhabitants of the earth may receive distinguished honours for their faithfulness, and although inferior in intelligence to the beings who may dwell in more enlightened spheres, be found to have employed their talents to the best of purposes, in performing the will of their Creator and advancing his glory, by improving and benefiting his creatures!

One great means of effecting the glorious end, said Sir Edward, may be found in the truly Christian and patriotic exertions of the founders of our national schools. When we survey them through the medium of their effects upon poste-

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rity, what incalculable benefits must they convey to man, to the latest periods of time! Happy are we who live in an age when the mists of error and the delusions of superstition are vanishing before the rays of truth; but happier will they be, who shall live when they are vanished entirely—when knowledge, virtue, and intellect shall reign, and by mankind becoming progressively wiser and better, evil shall be banished from the earth, or lost in the fruition of perfect good.

No person can appreciate more highly than myself, said the Vicar, the advantages that will be derived generally, as well as individually, from the present system of education for the poor in this country; and in half a century I am convinced that its beneficial effects will be fully obvious. I shall be happy to see the plan of instruction in some respects adopted in the higher walks of life; but I consider the system not yet complete, as children who are born to active labour are too long dependant on that of their parents for a maintenance, and frequently imbibe a dislike to the duties of their station, from not being earlier put to employment. This can only be remedied by the establishment of manu-

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factories in the neighbourhood of those national schools, where the children might labour at least half the day for their support, and devote the remainder to receiving instruction; which would be an effectual means of removing every objection to the education of the poor, and enable them at the same time to supply, at least in part, their own wants, by their industry. This would diminish much real evil, by removing its source; and if their habits of manual industry were stimulated in a manner similar to that in which their mental emulation is at present excited, what inconceivable benefit would in time be derived by society at large!

I am of the same opinion, said Sir Edward, and consider that if any means could be devised, to combine the advantages of instruction with the benefits of occupation, our prospects of national improvement would be greater, the advancement of virtue, the diminution of vice, misery, and want, would be proportionate, and the amelioration of the present evils of society would be in a great measure effected.

How delightful, said Mrs. Wentworth, are the feelings experienced by the soul that is alive to

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the good of the human species, in contemplating the thousands of youthful minds who are thus trained to piety and virtue, and stimulated to exertions by motives ennobling to their nature, and likely to be beneficial in their effect through every subsequent period of their lives! But these pleasing sensations must be embittered by reflection upon the serious inconveniencies and family deprivations which the parents of some of these children endure, in obtaining for them the necessary supply of food, and depriving themselves of the advantage of their labours. Happy indeed would it be for this country, if in commercial towns such manufactories could be established, as would furnish children with the means of support, and prevent them from being longer than necessary a burthen to their parents. It is not from superficial observation that the real inconvenience which many families endure, in depriving themselves of the benefit of their children's labour, or in not being able to obtain for them employment, can be ascertained: it is necessary to examine particularly, to visit the abodes of poverty, to investigate and enquire into the most obvious means of redress. From the opportunities which I have had of acquainting myself with the situation of the poor in this

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country, I will venture to pronounce that the man who should cause to be established a manufactory or other means of employment for the children of penury, combined with the advantages of the national institutions for their instruction, would render an essential service to society, benefit posterity, and deserve to be enrolled high on the glorious scale of the friends of humanity and benefactors of the human race.

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CONVERSATION VIII.

Observations upon Drs. Gall and Spurzheim's System relative to the Physical Causes of the Intellectual Character.

IN our observations upon character, said Charles, we have considered its causes simply as resulting from nature; its formation, from education in its most extended meaning; and its diversity, proceeding principally from the tendencies of incident connected with habit and association, and co-operating with the propensities, endowments, and bias of nature; but the subject is still enveloped in a great degree of obscurity. When we speak of nature as in a course of operation, we do not point out the mode in which she operates. If we were to enquire into the seat of the soul, the judgment, our emotions,

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perceptions, affections, and principles, we should not probably gain any new light, but might embarrass ourselves with our enquiries.

The seat of the judgment, said William, and our mental perceptions, is undoubtedely in the brain; that of the soul is not to be so easily decided, though this also has been considered to reside in the brain. We feel the operations of the perceptive faculties, in its compression, in close application or deep thought; but the sensible effects of the soul, as proceeding from our passions, emotions, or agitations, appear to proceed particularly from the breast; and if compelled to give an opinion, I should certainly affirm that the internal feelings it excites are most perceptible in the bosom of man.

The soul can only be discerned in its operations, said Sir Edward, and these are certainly more apparent from the exercise of the mental powers than from any other effect it produces. The intellectual faculties of thinking, conceiving, judging, deciding, certainly reside in the brain; but the immediate seat of the soul is an enquiry so involved in obscurity, and likely to be so little productive of utility, that I cannot per-

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ceive any absolute good that could result from the decision, even were we capable of ascertaining its more particular residence. We feel its impulses, perceive its operations, and follow its dictates: it expands, contracts, or enlarges, probably in some degree according to the organization of the frame it inhabits. The nature of the soul is the same in all mankind; but its operations are as various as the stature, form, and situation of individuals. The diversity of the effects which it occasions proceeds principally from its susceptible impressions, the passions, and the affections. The strength of these must at all times depend upon the susceptibility of the mind, or the peculiar delicacy of feeling inherited in a greater degree by some individuals than by others. The seat of the passions and affections, is the soul. The soul pervades the whole of our frame, and is so sensibly incorporated with it, that its agitations and emotions convey an almost instantaneous effect to the body.

As finite beings, said the Vicar, it is impossible for us properly to judge of an infinite principle, even existing in ourselves. We can trace its operations, but the manner of its connexion

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with our corporeal frame will, in all probability, for ever exceed the limited capacity of man. It is sufficient for us to improve to the utmost the faculties it imparts, to acquaint ourselves with the best means of their cultivation, and to apply them to the best end. 'The faculties of the mind,' says Dr. Reid, 'are the tools and engines we must use in every disquisition; and the better we understand their nature and force, the more successfully we shall be able to apply them.' 'By tracing the progress of the human intellect in the acquisition of knowledge,' says Dr. Cogan, in his inimitable Ethical Treatise on the Passions, 'we observe gradations which are curious as well as most interesting. The commencement consists in a single *idea* or thought impressed, which is connected with simple *perception*. This solicits *attention*, and according to its various degrees of importance, disposes to *observation, consideration, investigation, contemplation, meditation, reflection.* These eager and voluntary operations of the mind are absolutely necessary, in order to form *clear conceptions, right understanding*, an enlarged *comprehension* of some subjects, and nice *discernment*, and accurate *discriminations* concerning others; and these acquisitions enable us to *abstract* essential

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qualities in our minds from the subjects in which they are seated, to assemble others in new combinations, to *reason*, and draw important inferences, and finally to *judge* or decide concerning their excellencies or defects, their good or bad tendencies, their merits or demerits. Such are the powers which amply compensate for that ignorance in which we were born; by these, we are enabled to steer our course through the numberless errors to which inexperience may expose us, and surmount every difficulty and embarrassment in search after important and influential truth.'

Observe the connexion in the chain of intellectual percepience! First, an *idea;* then, *perception;* afterward, *observation, consideration, investigation, contemplation, meditation, reflection*, leading to *clear conceptions, right understanding, comprehension, discernment, discrimination*, the power of *abstracting;* then *reasoning*, and finally, *judgment*. Excuse my being thus prolix, but this sentence contains a little body of metaphysics, and deserves particular attention, as it so accurately points out the chain or gradations of the operations of intellect.

This, said Sir Edward, elucidates the tendencies,

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operations, and effect of the mental powers, but furnishes us with no new light as to their cause. From the little acquaintance I have with the investigations of our modern enquirers respecting the physical causes of the intellectual character, or the Physiology of the Brain, I am inclined to think their system will in time throw considerable light upon that important subject. The system is yet in embryo: time is necessary to develope its consistency, and the truth of its propositions, which subsequent observations must prove or invalidate. It opens to us a new channel, through which we may study the intellectual character, as to its primary cause. This has never yet been done. The possession of superior faculties has been imputed principally to nature, but no one has pointed out the manner in which nature produced the effects discerned. Genius, it is true, in its most extended signification, has been considered to proceed from the organization of our corporeal frame, but no attempt has been made to explain the peculiarities of nature which occasioned this phenomenon.

If we consider the system, said the Vicar, simply as it relates to the physical construction of the body, or as throwing new light upon the

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science of anatomy, its beneficial effects must be obvious to all; and though I can by no means implicitly coincide with the opinions of Doctors Gall and Spurzheim in every respect, we must acknowledge that the system is extremely ingenious, and at least claims attention from its novelty.

If we admit this system in its utmost extent, said Henry, what will become of our previous notion, that character is formed by association and incident: all our theories must vanish, and the opinions of Hartley, Locke, and others, will be overturned by the theory of these new investigators.

By no means, said Charles. The mental faculties must exist in man in a greater or less degree, otherwise no associations could call or incidents urge them into activity. A man of inferior mental capacity could never become equal to one of superior endowments.

True, said George; and I really think that if Charles's classification of the mind were combined with this sytem, a very ingenious theory might be formed, and in another century

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our plowmen and shoe-makers, would become metaphysicians and craniologists.

Amongst the latter class of mechanics, said William, we have had some very superior intellectual characters; as an example, allow me to quote the following lines from a work just published by the author of The Ponderer, entitled Remains of William Reed, late of Thornbury; with a Memoir of his Life.

REFLECTIONS.

The moments flew on airy wing,
When round the blest enchanted ring
Of infancy I play'd;
When the green hills I pac'd along,
Blithe as the woodlark's early song,
Soft gliding through the glade.

The sports of day, the games of night,
Alternate brought me new delight,
With every trifling toy;
Young Fancy danc'd with magic mein,
And painted o'er each rising scene
With tints of golden joy.

O happy hours, and scenes so fair!
How soon ye melted into air,
Like the gay rainbow's form!
The victim now of Sorrow's dart,
And Disappointment's bleeding smart,
And sport of every storm.

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Against one remark of our craniologist, said the Vicar, I must decidedly enter my protest. It is this: describing the organ of veneration, the Doctor observes, 'It is also known that one man may be religious without being just, and another may be just without being religious.' This is totally impossible: the principle of religion, in its operations upon the mind, totally eradicates every vestige of injustice. A man, it is true, may be morally just without being religious; but where religion resides, justice must necessarily dwell. He may be externally religious without being just; but where the sacred emanations of true religion pervade the mind, the strictest justice must ever influence the conduct.

'Heaven bids the Soul this mortal frame inspire;
Bids Virtue's ray divine inspire the Soul
With unprecarious flows of vital joy;
And without breathing, Man as well might hope
For life, as, without piety, for peace.'

The progressive advancement of knowledge, said Charles, is one of the most delightful contemplations of the benevolent mind; therefore every means merits attention which is likely to promote this desirable end; and the light which this system may impart relative to the physical

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causes of character may greatly facilitate its attainment, as it is calculated to smooth the rugged path of metaphysical investigation. If combined with an arrangement of character similar to the plan I have suggested, the philosophy of mind might be emancipated from the gloom in which it is at present involved, and be rendered as clear to the general comprehension of mankind, as the science of botany, mineralogy, and other branches of natural philosophy, which have been systematically arranged. It is certain that had not the material world been divided into its various parts, as the animal, mineral, and vegetable kingdoms, and the different branches of each been properly subdivided and arranged, natural history would still have remained in obscurity, and could not have been studied with the same pleasure and advantage as at present.

The gradations of the material world are obvious to those who have paid any attention to the diversified operations of nature—who can view with their mental eye the chain which unites man to the lowest species of quadrupeds, and descend with the scale of animated nature to the minutest animalculæ that our finest glasses enable us to perceive. Shall man then be exempt from the laws established throughout creation?

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and because our limited perceptions prevent us from beholding the chain of intelligence in the gradations of the intellectual world, shall ignorance assert that it does not exist? All I require in the judgment that shall be formed of my system is, that those who investigate it be previously capable of displaying the regular combinations prevailing throughout every part of the material world, and acquaint themselves with the diversified modifications of matter, before they presume to analyze mind.

Not from the children of science, Charles! said Sir Edward, will your system meet reprehension: they will readily perceive that its basis is laid in truth, and that a superstructure may be erected thereupon, which may exist as long as creation itself. The unenlightened part of mankind alone will depreciate a theory which their unexpanded faculties may not enable them to comprehend; and from such you must expect it will receive that contempt and derision which the ignorant bestow on whatever is beyond their comprehension. For my own part, I confess myself obliged to you for thus enlarging my views of the intellectual world, and affording a greater range to my ideas of the existing grada-

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tions of intelligence, which I am astonished that I did not before perceive as clearly as I do at present.

The gradations of intellect, said Charles, have always existed: they may be discerned in every nation, in every age, and in every state of society. The possibility of a regular systematical classification is so obvious and clear to my mind, that I can scarcely persuade myself, that the plan I have suggested forms the first attempt to simplify the subject. The gradations are clearly observable in every town, in every village, and even in every family.

The vast difference that exists among men in every station of life is apparent to the most superficial observer. Some persons, from the debasement of their minds, the supineness of their faculties, and the degradation of their moral conduct, rank little above the animal creation; and we feel humiliation in reflecting that they belong to our species. Others, from their enlarged comprehensions, appear capable of piercing into the regions of etherial existence, deducing consequences of vast importance from the most apparently inconsiderable causes, and reducing to the common standard of the human capacity the most abstruse and difficult subjects.

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Systematical arrangements have always been attended with utility in the advancement of the science to which they have been applied; and while the philosophy of the mind is studied in its present desultory manner, its progress must be as slow as that of other less important sciences, previous to a regular classification; nor can it be more ridiculous or perplexing to mankind in general than the Linnæan or other systems have been which are now generally received and adopted.

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CONVERSATION IX.

The Scale of the Moral World displayed, and combined with the Gradations of the Intellectual, according to the suggested Classification of the Human Mind.

THE classification I have ventured to suggest, said Charles, might, I think, be considerably improved, by combining the gradations of the intellectual world with the virtues of the moral, and uniting them in a descending scale, from the highest point of mental elevation to the lowest degree of moral degradation. By pointing out the distinguishing properties of each order, as well as the characteristic distinctions of the classes, every individual would be able accurately to ascertain his rank in the moral and immaterial world; and the science of man might be studied by rules and elementary

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principles deduced from observation, and applicable to the various ranks in life and different situations of man upon earth.

Could such a system be precisely arranged, said Sir Edward, it would undoubtedly be productive of very beneficial practical effects in society; as it would be a continual incentive to emulation and a spur to the advancement of our moral and intellectual character. But in what manner do you conceive this combining system might be most successfully displayed?

In the scale of intellect and morality which I presume to suggest, replied Charles, I would place at the head of the system, that virtue which more particularly emanates from the Deity, and originates in his love—I mean Benevolence; for the diffusion of this principle in a greater or less degree through the mind produces by its various modifications, the different virtues with which it is combined, as Philanthropy, Charity, Patience. The nearer we approach to the Deity in his attributes, the greater is our advancement to the highest perfection of which our nature is capable.

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The perfectibility of man, collectively, said the Vicar, is demonstrable from the progress of the sciences, and the improvement of the arts which adorn civilized life. His individual capacity for progressive advancement in knowledge and virtue is deducible from his nature, his situation upon earth, his subjection to the moral government of the Deity, and evidently from Revelation. The term perfectibility does not imply the possibility of arriving at perfection, but only a capacity for advancing towards it. In the gradual developement and unfolding of those powers which in many instances lie buried in the soul of man, and the acquisition of those virtues and graces which animate us to approximate by nearer degrees toward the source from whence they proceed, arises in a great measure the happiness of man in this life, and will, doubtless, essentially constitute it in that which is to come;—when

——————"Our moral powers,
By perfect light enlarged and purified,
Shall ceaseless glow with Love's etherial flame,
From God himself, her primal source and sun,
Receive and round communicate her warmth
Of gladness and of glory."

The principle of benevolence, resumed Charles, originating in love to God, and producing love

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to man, constitutes, in its most extended signification, the possession of every virtue which ennobles our nature, and the enjoyment of those exquisite and refined feelings which result from exalted devotion. This principle must necessarily predominate in superior minds, since it alone constitutes their superiority; as whatever may be the understanding of man, the mental faculties, uncombined with the moral virtues, cannot impart real exaltation to the character nor happiness to the individual: it is from the prevalance and combination of both that superiority arrises; and as benevolence is the distinguishing characteristic of the superior order of human beings, so is malevolence of the inferior; therefore Benevolence should be placed at the top, and Malevolence at the bottom of the connecting scale of gradations of the moral and intellectual world.

The first class would, I conceive, admit of three orders or divisions; the second, of five; and the third, of seven.

The distinguishing properties of the different orders of each class should be affixed, that we might be able to discriminate and arrange as precisely as possible their various modifications. This arrangement is of greater magnitude than

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the classification itself. I will, however, venture to communicate the distinguishing properties which I conceive might with propriety be adjudged to some of the orders of the different classes.

The characteristic properties of the first class are, benevolence, comprising devotion; justice, integrity, humility, zeal. The distinguishing properties of the first order,—strong intellect, clear perceptions, unclouded views, genuine piety, profound humility, well-directed zeal, unbounded love, centering in God, and extending to man and all creation. The distinguishing properties of the second order,—justice, integrity, self-command; of the third order, penetration, and so forth. Their proper arrangement should be decided by persons of accurate discrimination, attentive observation, general and erudite knowledge, and long experience.

Fidelity, moderation, application, and steady perseverance, may, I think, be considered applicable to the second class.

The characteristic properties of the third class are, philanthropy, hospitality, generosity, gratitude, charity, patience, forbearance, meekness, pity, compassion, gentleness, and all the social virtues. The distinguishing properties of

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the first order, acute feeling, quick perception, and distinguished exertion; of the second order, capacity for distinguished exertion, decision, and industry; of the third order, emulation, warm feeling, quick susceptibility, and energetic action, when that action is stimulated by motives sufficiently strong to rouze the individual to develope the energies of his mind, otherwise they may remain in lethargic supineness and torpid inactivity.

The characteristic properties of the fourth class are, self-interest, conceit, pride, vanity, presumption, arrogance, and other similar defects. This would at least admit of sixteen orders or divisions. Weakness of understanding or feebleness of intellect is of course the leading characteristic of the fifth class; and stupidity, or total inaptitude of comprehension, of the sixth.

To this arrangement should be affixed the descending gradations of malevolence, which sink man far below the animal creation. From the influence of this principle proceeds most of the evils to which the moral world is subject, and which must be extirpated before peace and happiness can widely diffuse their beams, or the invigorating rays of Christianity attract man nearer toward the perfection of his nature.

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To the malevolent class belong duplicity, falsehood, cunning, envy, malice, and revenge. The greater the intellectual capacity of the individual in whom these malignant propensities reside, the greater is his moral degradation, or the lower must he necessarily rank in the scale of malevolence.

So imperfect is our nature, continued Charles, it must be remembered that there is no person exempt from the infirmities to which, in this state of being, it has pleased our Creator to make us subject; therefore in the suggested scale of intellect and morality, the residence of the virtues and vices and their various modifications should be carefully discriminated from transitory impulses. It is their permanent influence only which constitutes rank in the moral world, or entitle the individual to a higher station in this combining scale.

Genuine sensibility has been considered inherent in the three first classes. The ambition, or whatever term we may affix to the principle which incites an individual to endeavour to attain the perfection of his nature, may also be considered as belonging to these classes: if it prevailed in the fourth class, it would induce that degree of exertion which enables the individual

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to raise himself from an inferior to a superior class, and be a constant incentive to improvement. Integrity is also a concomitant of the three first classes. Perfection, it is true, can never be attained; and this is a wise ordination, otherwise no increase of happiness hereafter could be expected; nor would circumstances be, as at present, pregnant with the means of advancing our intellectual and moral standard.

Men conceive perfection, said the Vicar, but are capable only of improvement. 'It is happy,' says Ferguson, in his Institutes, 'to value personal qualities above every other consideration,' and 'it is unhappy to lay the pretensions of human nature so low as to check its exertions.' The progressive advancement of the human mind in knowledge and virtue, is a subject fraught with the highest consolation to the reflecting mind. A proper application of this capacity, even in the ordinary concerns of life, would inspire us with so lively a concern to promote our best interest, that many of the incidents of life which diminish our comforts or embitter our enjoyments would lose their poignancy, from the consideration that they were calculated more effectually to advance our station here and in-

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crease our happiness in a future state of existence. 'An article of human happiness' is said to lie 'in the exercise of our faculties, either of body or mind, in the pursuit of some engaging end.'

The end we must have in view, in this sublime, this noble, this rational pursuit, is our advancement, not only in knowledge and happiness, but in the scale of percipient being; and let not ignorance and prejudice cloud this delightful, this consolatory idea with the mists of error, bigotry, and superstition; for assuredly whatever be the advancement we make in virtue, we procure a proportionate accession of future happiness; as on the other hand, every accumulation of vice is the treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath.

Happiness, said Sir Edward, is a personal quality, not an attribute of external condition. To increase our virtue in this life, must be a mean of encreasing our capacity for enjoying the exquisite beatitude of unalloyed bliss, in that state of immateriality to which we are advancing. This consideration should inspire us with the liveliest commiseration for the unhappy beings who belong to the malevolent class; since their gratifications sink them still lower in depravity,

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and the momentary pleasure they may experience from the successful exercise of their malignant propensities, must be ultimately productive of shame, mortification, and misery to themselves; rendering reflection a poisonous dart, and sinking them to the very lowest state of moral degradation.

The application of this combining system of intellect and morality, said Mrs. Osbourne, might be even serviceable in our intercourse with the world. Self-interest being the characteristic of the fourth class, if we wish to gain a point with persons belonging to any of its orders, we have only to enlist their self-interest in our service, and we shall doubtless prevail. But a higher motive must be employed with the third and higher classes; as the philanthropic and benevolent mind revolts at an action that even appears instigated by a mean and sordid principle, and more readily sacrifices to the increase of the gratification of others, than to the promotion of its own.

Ah! wherefore happy? Where the kindred mind?
Where the large soul that takes in human kind?
Where the best passions of the mortal breast?
Where the warm feelings when another's blest?

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Where the soft lenitives of other's pain,
The social sympathy, the sense humane,
The sigh of rapture, and the tear of joy,
Anguish that charms, and transports that destroy?

H. More.

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CONVERSATION X.

Observations upon Government, as connected with the diversified Characters of the Human Species.

ANOTHER cause of the diversity of character existing among men, said William, which we proposed to consider, may be imputed to the nature of the Government under which they live. Whether national character proceeds from or produces the constitution of the country, is a question of too political a cast for us to discuss, at least in the presence of the ladies. We may however remark, that some governments are more peculiarly constituted than others, to form particular character. Science and knowledge must flourish in a greater degree in countries where free enquiry is allowed, than where it is restricted. Liberty cannot be enjoyed where subjects of discussion are restrained, and where individuals are not permitted to investigate the

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principles of government or the doctrines of religion; and even at this day, when civilization and its attendant advantages of knowledge and social intercourse so generally prevail, and have diffused so many blessings to man, there are countries in which political observations are not allowed, and where enquiries into matters of religious import are brought under the cognizance of the legislative power.

While this species of mental tyranny exists, said Sir Edward, the progress of intellect in the human race will be retarded, and nations continue enveloped in the ignorance to which national habit has consigned them; nor can they ever emerge from the gloom of restrained associations, until they are permitted to exercise their rational faculties, and to think and judge for themselves; and this can never be while institutions exist, privileged to punish individuals for daring to think differently from the manner which they prescribe. Happy are we, who, born and educated in a free country, are not only permitted but encouraged to exercise our thinking faculties, and recompensed when such exertions contribute to the advancement of knowledge, the improvement of the arts, or the good of our fellow creatures.

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An Englishman, said George, cannot be too thankful for the advantages and privileges he enjoys. No terrors of the Inquisition, no fear of the *auto da fé*, prevent him from enquiring, examining, and judging for himself. Truth is open to his investigation, if he will only take the trouble to seek it; and yet there is no country where diversity of opinion is so prevalent as in our own.

That very diversity of opinion, said the Vicar, impels freedom of enquiry, promotes the increase of knowledge, the improvement of the rational faculties of man, and, I believe, will be a great means of finally exterminating error and establishing truth; and in another generation, liberality of sentiment will, I hope, more generally prevail, and diversity in political opinions or religious sentiments will be no longer allowed to close the heart to affection or shut the hand to charity. The water, however pure its source, which remains stagnant, will at best continue unfit for every purpose of wholesome nutriment; while the stream that glides onward, though it may meet with obstruction from bodies of grosser nature, with which it seems to mix and become turbid, will yet, the farther it flows, return nearer

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and nearer to its pristine clearness, and afford refreshment and comfort to the greater number of those who thirst after its life-giving properties. And truth, like gold, however it may be obscured by baser matter, will the sooner emerge from obscurity, and evince its superior pureness, the more it is exposed to action and the consequent trials of its solidity and strength.

It is not necessary to our subject, said Charles, to enquire what particular mode of government is best calculated to produce superiority of moral character in man; but we can just glance at the effects that generally proceed from the various modifications of executive power, as apparent in the diversity of character existing in different nations.

Despotism, said William, is inimical to the rights, privileges, and interests of mankind in general. Learning cannot flourish, virtue prevail, nor the intellectual powers unfold themselves, in a mean state, nor in a servile nation, blindly subservient to the imperious will of a sovereign who, guided by no council, restrained by no law, follows only his inclination, considers his subjects as his slaves, and that he has an equal and

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unbounded right over the property, persons, and lives of his people. Governments of this description exist; and while they are sanctioned by more enlightened states, encouraged by local governors, and submitted to by the people, intellect and virtue cannot diffuse light and happiness, nor can man enjoy his privileges as a free agent and a rational creature. Monarchy or the selection of a chief, was probably one of the first forms of government. Every individual was subservient to his commands. In the earliest ages of the world, this chief was probably the one whom nature assigned them for their parent and general master: he possessed unbounded authority, and was invested with the right of punishing the offences of his children or his servants according to his will. As civilization advanced, men of course perceived the necessity for restraining a right which, from ceasing to be natural, became arbitrary, by certain laws, calculated to promote the good of the community at large. Hence proceeded a form of government more or less limited. If we consider society collectively, I cannot conceive human nature in a more abased state than under a despotic, unlimited monarchy, when the ruler is a tyrant. Liberty constitutes the great blessing of life: it is the soul of our

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enjoyments, and the natural gift of Heaven; liberty in social life is not the unbounded freedom of the savage uncultivated state: it implies restraint, but it is a privileged restraint, sacred in its nature and beneficial in its effects, since political liberty is only natural liberty restrained by laws which are calculated to promote the well-being of a whole community.

Virtue, in its most extended signification, is essential to a republican form of government: it cannot exist, unless patriotism animate and pervade the entire commonwealth. For when ambition or self-interest acquires power, there public must cease to exist. Virtue is not so essential in an aristocratical form of government as in one that is entirely democratical: the same freedom and love of liberty is not so necessary to promote the good of the whole. Therefore the characters of mankind, as connected with the various forms of executive power, result in a great degree from its nature. The principles of a republican and of the subject of a despot, must be totally opposite—the one too servile, the other, perhaps, too independent. Happy are those persons who live under a wise and well-regulated constitution, where the various

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principles that constitute these different denominations of national government are so united and blended, as to form a whole, perfect as the intermixture of its parts will admit, and who enjoy, in this security of their property, their possessions and private rights, that tranquillity which results from the wisdom and due enforcement of legislative power, and that peace which proceeds from the proper exertion of executive authority, having no cares but to increase that property which they have a legal right to appropriate according to their uncontrouled will!

The greatest of all national evils, said Sir Edward, is that which results from unbounded ambition, or the insatiable desire of extending dominion, which at one period or other has distinguished most nations. This may add to their external glory, but must be inevitably injurious, where it undermines the constitution or exhausts its resources. National good is promoted more by attention to internal economy, a wise regulation and due enforcement of the laws which secure the rights of the individual and promote the general improvement of the community, than by acquiring possessions which, however splendid in their nature, are not calculated to

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extend the commerce, promote the agriculture, or advance the internal happiness of a nation.

Ye friends of truth, ye statesmen who survey
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay!
'Tis your's to judge how wide the limits stand
Between a splendid and a happy land.
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
And shouting Folly hails them, from the shore;
Hoards e'en beyond the miser's wish abound,
And rich men flock from all the world around.
Yet count our gains, this wealth is but a name,
That leaves our useful product still the same.

GOLDSMITH.

Every Briton, said Charles, must be sensible of the importance and utility of commerce. Its possession and extension must be an object at all times deserving the attention of legislative power, since it is from commerce that the wealth and glory of nations proceed. By diminishing individual privileges and the rights of private traffic, the community at large would be proportionately injured; as it is in the sum of individual good that general well-being consists. Independence of principle, of character and conduct, is greatly connected with independence of situation. The independence of a nation is necessary to its honour, its rights, and privileges: unless it be independent, it cannot be free,

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honourable, or happy. The same may be said of individual character, situation, and intellect. Hence we may determine why virtue so greatly prevails in free and independent states, while it diminishes progressively, as we carry downward our view to those forms of government which are distinguished only for their gradations of arbitrary power, despotism and tyranny; whence are banished

"All gentler morals, such as play
Through life's more cultur'd walks, and charm the way:
These, far dispersed, on tim'rous pinions fly,
To sport and flutter in a kinder sky."

We may at the same time observe, that

"In every Government, though terrors reign,
Though tyrant kings or tyrant laws restrain,
How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!
Still to ourselves in every place consign'd
Our own felicity we make or find.
With secret course which no loud storms annoy,
Glides the smooth current of domestic joy;
The lifted axe, the agonizing wheel,
Luke's iron crown, and Damien's bed of steel,
To men remote from power but rarely known,
Leave reason, faith, and conscience all our own."

Therefore virtue, when it resides in the mind, may exist equally in despotic states as under

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more independent governments. It is only to national character that our observations could apply.

True, replied Sir Edward; but as the sum of individual constitutes the national character, whatever is calculated to promote individual good must necessarily advance the national prosperity.

The gradations of intellect, said Charles, are conspicuous in nations as well as amongst individuals, and may be considered as resulting from the opportunities of general culture, the encouragement afforded to individual exertions, and the recompense bestowed upon talent. It is equally the duty of the legislative power to reward those who contribute to the glory, improvement or well-being of the nation, as to punish or restrain conduct that may be inimical to its internal peace and domestic happiness.

The political opinions and national character of men, said William, depend greatly on the influence of association and climate. The love of liberty does not generally glow with equal warmth in the minds of inhabitants of higher

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temperatures, as among those of milder or more frigid climes. Virtue, in colder regions, considered unconnected with Christianity, has generally assumed a severer aspect than in the sultry parts of the globe; for there luxury prevails in proportion to the bounties of nature, and artificially according to the riches of a state. Where the earth calls upon man to sacrifice the greater portion of his time and activity in earnest of her contributions either to his comforts or necessities, there will ever be found a greater degree of jealousy in the guardianship of individual rights and property; while under the sun's more genial influence, and breathing an atmosphere that needs comparitively little thought for either bodily sustenance or protection from the weather —where, indeed, nature's choicest productions present themselves to his hand almost spontaneously—he regards all other advantages connected with corporeal being, as very inferior points of anxiety or speculation.

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CONVERSATION XI.

Remarks on Illustrious Females who have distinguished themselves by benefiting Society.

AS the subjects of our enquiry, said William, have not latterly allowed the ladies to contribute their share to our evening's amusement, and as I am become weary of questions in which they either cannot or will not bear a sufficient part, I beg leave to propose one for dissussion, in the hope that the ladies will oblige us with their distinct opinion, by informing us what character amongst their own sex they consider entitled to the highest rank, or merits the denomination of the most illustrious.

A very interesting topic, William! said Sir Edward; and I request the younger ladies will be the first to favour us with their opinion.

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The most illustrious female character that I can recollect at present, said Harriet, was Chelonida, Princess of Sparta, who was married to Cleombrotus. She followed her father, Leonidas, into banishment; and when he was restored to the throne, refused the honours of royalty, to accompany her husband into exile.

Harriet, said Sir Edward, has been so happy in displaying the union of filial and connubial affections, a proper regard to duty, and a disregard for the enjoyments of affluence, when opposed to the sacred obligations of nature, that I doubt if any other of our young friends can cite an example of female virtue equally interesting.

The instances that occur to my recollection, said Louisa, of virtues displayed by females, are numerous; but still I do not remember any superior to that which Harriet has instanced. Instead of giving an opinion, allow me to solicit information, and enquire why Catherine, the wife of the Czar, Peter the First, is stiled Catherine the Great?

A very appropriate enquiry, said Mrs. Osbourne; and as the subject was proposed by William, I

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request that he alone may resolve my niece's question.

I am really, Madam! obliged by your reference for a solution of this question to me; but I should prefer being favoured with Sophronia's explication.

As the title was conferred by your sex, and not by mine, replied Sophronia, the explanation is very properly referred to a gentleman.

Why, then, Madam! by the term Great we naturally consider something superior is implied —something that upon comparison claims pre-eminence; the term being therefore relative, its value of course depends upon that of the objects with which it is compared.

Ah, William! said Mrs. Osbourne, when we engage in a bad cause against our better judgment, to what weak subterfuges are we obliged to have recourse! But I leave the matter to be settled by you and Sophronia.

Indeed, Madam! you are a little too hard upon me. I have only asserted that *great* is opposed

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to *little*, and that degrees exist but by comparison; which I presume Sophronia will not attempt to deny.

Certainly not; however, we did not require a definition of the term, but the reason for its application to the first Empress of Russia.

Historians, I believe, have applied the epithet in consequence of her superior talents and exalted rank in life.

Do superior talents and exalted rank always merit such a distinctive appellation?

As far as relates to themselves, when compared with inferior qualities, they certainly do.

By these evasions of the simple question, William! we are not enabled to form a judgment whether the term *great* was justly applied to Catherine or not.

She certainly possessed extensive power, brilliant qualities, and superior talents; 'further this deponent sayeth not.'

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We may, then, said Sophronia, beg leave to be favoured with your sister's explanation of the reason why Catherine was distinguished among royal females by the epithet great.

It must have been, replied the youngest Miss Berine, from her sovereignty, the vast extent of power she enjoyed, her talents and accomplishments; since she certainly did not merit it for her virtues or rectitude of conduct.

True, said Mrs. Osbourne; and in reading history we should carefully distinguish between the splendid and the useful—the blaze of great exploits and the blessing of good qualifications—the brilliant vices that extend dominion, and the silent virtues that diffuse happiness. It is by thus attending to the minutiæ of character that we are enabled to form a proper judgement. Historians who accede to an assumption of the epithet *great* on the part of characters in which goodness forms only a subordinate place, disgrace their talents and mislead posterity; nor can we respect a nation that sanctions such a perversion of language, nor the moralist who will not withdraw from before our eyes the tinsel which obscures our judgment. As Catherine, notwith-

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standing the brilliancy of her talents, does not come under your idea of illustrious females, whom would you name as an example?

The Countess of Montford, commonly called Joan of Flanders, was as exalted a heroine as I can at present recollect. Impelled by maternal and conjugal affection, she overcame the timidity of her sex, headed an army when her husband was taken prisoner, and by her exertions obtained for him the Dukedom of Brittany, which he was desirous of possessing.

The Countess of Montford, said Sir Edward, certainly claims a high rank amongst distinguished females, and affords one amidst innumerable examples, of the great deeds which your sex are capable of effecting, when excited by the best and tenderest feelings of our nature.

I consider that female as the most illustrious, said Maria, who, endowed with superior talents, endeavours to promote the improvement and happiness of her fellow-creatures.

Such a character, said the Vicar, is certainly entitled to our highest respect; but if the talents

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she possesses are the gift of nature, no merit is due to her, except for their proper cultivation. If in the use to which she applies them, she only follows the path pointed out to her in the ordinary course of Providence, she is entitled to no greater merit than my servant, who performs a benevolent action because I commanded him to do it. The merit is his, only in proportion to the alacrity and pleasure of his obedience, which will in a great measure display his disposition and inclination; but let not the creature take from the Creator, or give to man the glory which is due to God.

There is nothing, said Sophronia, more revolting to the female mind, when not entirely divested of the diffidence and timidity inherent to the sex, than to attract in any degree the public attention; so truly is the character of woman delineated in these lines.

Woman, born to dignify retreat,
Unknown to flourish, and unseen be great,
To give domestic life its sweetest charm,
With softness polish, and with virtue warm,
Fearful of praise, unwilling to be known,
Should seek but Heaven's applauses and her own.

H. More.

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The most exalted female character, said Miss Berine, in my opinion, is the woman who devotes her time and her fortune to the relief of her fellow-creatures—who delights to instruct the ignorant, to succour the indigent, and to protect the oppressed.

Now, Sophronia! for your opinion, said George.

My opinion is, replied Sophronia, that the most illustrious female character, who is of the greatest benefit to society, the most likely to communicate good to posterity, who claims the greatest honours from the community, who best accomplishes the end of her creation, and is most entitled to our gratitude, esteem, and admiration, is—not the woman who, forgetting the native softness of her sex, sallies forth to fight the battles of her country—nor she who, wielding the pen, abjures the sacred ties of domestic duty, and consecrates herself to general rather than particular usefulness; but it is she who, with sweet placidity and soft complying grace, with the gentle demeanor of unaffected goodness, the smile of cheerfulness, the serenity of innate peace, the activity of industry, the thoughtfulness

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of attention, the gaiety of innocence, and the tranquillity of contentment, seeks to perform the duties of her station—of a station ennobled by those duties to which she has consecrated herself, that will transmit her virtues to posterity, render her name sacred to the succeeding generation, and inestimably dear to the hearts of those who call her mother, and to the soul of him who distinguishes her by the appellation of friend, companion, wife. It hence follows, that my most illustrious female character is a good wife and an affectionate mother.

Very well, Sophronia! said Sir Edward; I give you credit for your judgement; and married ladies should certainly feel much obliged by your decision.

The superiority I give them, Sir! is that to which they are justly entitled, when they properly perform the difficult and important duties annexed to their station. Let the most useful claim the pre-eminence, and the female who thus most effectually benefits society be most entitled to its gratitude, esteem, and veneration.

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This consideration, said Mrs. Osbourne, should inspire the mothers of well-regulated families with a due conviction of their importance in society; and not allow them to shrink into insignificance before a display of the splendid attainments or brilliant talents of their less useful contemporaries.

Mothers, said Mrs. Wentworth, who love their children, should labour to store their own minds for the sake of enriching those of their offspring; and instead of devoting their time to frivolous pursuits, attempt the cultivation of their reason, and endeavour to make those from whom the next generation must proceed capable of alike improving and enlightening posterity.

Intellect, said Mrs. Osbourne, is conspicuous in the more minute as well as in more important matters: the same powers of mind that conduce to the proper regulation of a family might have been as successfully exercised in the government of a state. Had Queen Elizabeth been born in a private station, instead of being the first sovereign in Europe, she would probably have been the best housewife, and have contributed to the happiness of a family in the same degree as she

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promoted the welfare of the nation. It is the peculiar duty of woman to endeavour to make

> "Home, the resort
> Of love, of joy, of peace and plenty; where,
> Supporting and supported, polish'd friends
> And near relations mingle into bliss."
>
> THOMSON.

The domestic virtues of females, said Mrs. Wentworth, entitle them to a higher rank in the scale of usefulness than literary attainments; unless those attainments are calculated to produce greater good than the silent virtues which adorn a private station. To secure happiness in domestic life, it is not only necessary that the virtues should be possessed, but that the rational faculties also should be cultivated.

It cannot be desirable that the intellectual character of man should be reduced to the general standard of woman; therefore to raise the sexes to a level with each other, and prevent that consciousness and ungenerous display of superiority in the one sex, which, if refinement of feeling is possessed by the other, either dissipates affection or produces silent misery, should be

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the endeavour of all who are entrusted with the education of youth, and the aim of every one who is desirous to promote the happiness of individuals and the general good of mankind.

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CONVERSATION XII.

Observations on the Female Character, and its general Influence upon Society.

NOTHING, said Mrs. Osbourne, has a greater tendency to excite a desire to attain excellence, than the frequent contemplation of eminent characters. The study of Biography is therefore peculiarly calculated to improve as well as to interest the feelings. The youthful mind is strongly impressed with the display of superior virtues, and with instances of heroic conduct; but it frequently happens, that the man whose soul has been elevated by reflections upon the sublime and beautiful, as described in books, views with comparative indifference, if not actual disgust, the common and unadorned scenes of passing events; and at almost every step he finds briars and thorns, where he expected

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myrtles and roses, and perceives precipices and caverns instead of bowers and fountains. He discovers, on a farther progress, to his increased mortification and disappointment, that superior virtues and excellence are as uncommon in the moral world, as the sublime and beautiful are rare, in his abstracted and confined views of the natural world. His mind, in youthful life, opens to the seducing charms of friendship: he yields to the sweet impulse, and expects happiness to be his portion; but alas! the flowery scene is soon over-clouded, disappointment attends his steps, and visions of felicity fly before his grasp. It is not until his feelings have been lacerated by repeated suffering, and his understanding is enabled to comprehend the Creator's grand designs of moral government, that he becomes reconciled to the general plan of Providence, and perceives the wisdom of an improvable creature being placed in a state where every change may be made subservient to his progressive advanceement, and the promotion of his final good. This, as I have already observed, seldom occurs to the limited perceptions of early years;

For youth, too transient flower of life's short day!
The shortest part, but blossoms to decay:

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Lo! while we give the unregarded hour
To wine and revelry, in Pleasure's bower,
The noiseless foot of Time steals gently by,
And e're we dream of manhood, age is nigh.

JUVENAL.

Biographical memoirs, said Charles, are peculiarly calculated to excite emulation, and are frequently productive of very beneficial effects; but it is to be regretted that the history of mind is not more generally connected with the recital of incident; for whatever is calculated to advance our knowledge in a science the most important to man, is intimately connected with the improvement of posterity.

True, replied Sir Edward; but the differences in the capacity of mind are so great, that the same incidents essentially vary in their effects in different individuals, and even in the same persons at different periods. The science of the mind is in itself so complex and difficult a study, that I much doubt whether it will ever arrive at the perfection that other sciences have attained.

From the perfectible nature of man, said Charles, the progressive developement of his faculties, and the proportionate extension of

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his investigations, we have reason to believe that improvement may be made in mental philosophy, no less than in natural philosophy. In fact, were we to analyze the subject, we should find that mental philosophy is intimately connected with both moral and natural philosophy. But as we have enlarged sufficiently on this head, I should be happy to attend this evening to any subject of discussion that may be proposed by the ladies; and I have no doubt but that Sophronia's ingenuity will immediately suggest an interesting topic.

I receive your compliment on the part of my sex, replied Sophronia; and beg leave to enquire into the cause of the superior degree of ingenuity which you allow us to possess?

As no ordinary portion of that ingenuity, replied Charles, is requisite to pursue the enquiry, we will, if you please, leave the subject entirely to yourselves.

The reason is obvious, said Mrs. Osbourne: the peculiar degree of delicacy possessed by women, and the greater susceptibility of their feelings, leads them to quicker perceptions, and

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induces them to draw more ready inferences. We see as it were instantaneously, judge from momentary impressions, and decide rather from the convictions arising from casual occurrences, than from the remote nature of things, or from deductions after a long chain of reasoning. We are sensible of our incapacity for close argument; but, conscious of our quickness of comprehension, this in some respects occasions our volatility and sprightliness. When we reflect seriously, our volatility becomes placidity, and our sprightliness subsides into cheerfulness.

In either sex, said Mrs. Wentworth, a vacant mind is to be deplored, as a continual burden and source of discontent. Like an ill-furnished or empty house, it affords few comforts or real enjoyments; nor is a better stored but ill-regulated mind much more capable of imparting satisfaction.

One cause of frequent unhappiness to females, said Mrs. Osbourne, is, that not being sufficiently aware of the different constitutions of their minds, they expect to find an equal degree of innate delicacy of feeling in the other sex. In this case disappointment is ever the result;

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for if the minds of both sexes were in this respect equal, the power possessed by our sex, of refining, softening, and I was about to say, of new modelling the other, would not exist. Men who have associated little with females, or only with the inferior part of the sex, have seldom a proper idea of the native delicacy which prevails in an untarnished, uncorrupted mind, or they certainly would not so frequently consider themselves justifiable in trifling with and wounding the feelings of those whom confidence and affection have made dependent on them for happiness. Women should be early acquainted with the truth of this remark of Madame Maintenon, in one of her Letters: Les hommes sont pour l'ordinaire moins tendres que les femmes; et vous serey malheureuse, si vous êtes délicate en amitié, c'est un commerce ou il faut toujours mettre du sien.

This may be applicable, Madam, said Charles, to common characters, but not to men of superior and refined minds—

" For constant truth and generous worth will scorn
To plunge in woe the tender, gentle mind—
Will ne'er implant the soul-corroding thorn,
Nor seek to wound the heart to him resigned;

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With tenderest sympathy her griefs he'll share,
Bear in her woes at least an equal part—
Ne'er fill her breast with agony and care,
Nor wring with anguish the too tender heart."

For the honour of human nature, Charles, replied Mrs. Osbourne, I concede to your opinion, though many instances might be adduced, from the conduct of, in other respects, very honourable men, of the little regard paid to the feelings of women, when from the confidence and affection reposed in them, they consider themselves invested with the right of wounding a heart that has consecrated itself to their happiness.

A frequent cause of unhappiness, said Mrs. Wentworth, to youth of both sexes, who possess minds above the common order, is the glowing colours in which their imagination paints the virtues and superior qualifications of the objects of their esteem and regard. The enthusiasm of their feelings induces them to believe that the most trivial actions proceed from noble, generous, or disinterested motives. How bitter is their disappointment, on discovering that actions which they attributed to motives ennobling to their nature, proceeded from such only as were degrading to it, or were at least calculated to injure

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instead of advance the happiness of their fellow-creatures.

This error of the youthful mind, said Sir Edward, proceeds from an imagination which has been nursed 'far from the busy haunts of men,' or which, from its creative properties, models at will, characters after its own standard of perfection, independently of a proper acquaintance with human nature, its frailties and imperfections. It is of importance to our happiness that we entertain just sentiments, or such as are founded on experience and the general knowledge of the world; otherwise we become the authors of our own disappointment and mortification.

It is a lamentable consideration, said Mrs. Osbourne, that a knowledge of the world should deaden the finest feelings of our nature. The generous, unsophisticated youth, may be transformed into the gloomy misanthrope. The heart that at one period has been warmed by benevolence, may close itself against the claims of poverty and the groans of misery. The want of experience and of that knowledge of the world, which can only be acquired from mixing in its

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busy scenes, has frequently been the source of much unhappiness to the youthful mind; but it seldom happens that this experience is acquired without sacrificing in some degree, the naiveté of innocence and the candour of simplicity.

Men of superior refinement, said Lady Berine, have in every age been sensible of the advantages to be derived from associating with women of polished manners and cultivated minds. Even Socrates professed to have acquired eloquence from a female; and the refined taste of Pericles was formed and heightened by his intercourse with the softer sex.

How beautifully descriptive of what women should be, said Mrs. Osbourne, is the sentence in Holy Writ, which represents them as the polished corners of the temple. No turbulent passions or unamiable propensities should diminish the lustre of the female character; nor should vanity or caprice ever tarnish the mind which is endowed by reason and adorned with integrity and truth.

The susceptibility of the female mind, said Mrs. Wentworth, to the impulses of humanity,

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has prevailed in every age and in every state of society. Frequent testimonies are given by persons who have travelled amongst the most unpolished nations, of the naturally benevolent and compassionate dispositions of the fair sex.

"No proud delay, no dark suspicion,
Stints the free bounty of their heart;
They turn not from the sad petition,
But cheerful aid at once impart."

The cold feelings of abstracted prudence do not proceed from nature, but from observation, and a conviction of the necessity for repressing the warm and animated emotions of sympathy, and restraining them within bounds that may not lay them open to imposition and treachery. The desire of alleviating the sufferings of others, has in many instances, plunged the susceptible mind into error, and been productive of extreme anguish and misery.

In whatever situation of life we may be placed, said Mrs. Osbourne, if our sources of affliction have not been occasioned by our follies and vices, we should derive consolation from the rectitude of our motives and the benevolence of our intentions—

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Though plunged in ills and exercised in care,
Yet never let the noble mind despair;
When prest by dangers and beset by foes,
The Gods their timely succour interpose;
And when our virtue sinks, o'erwhelm'd with grief,
By unforeseen expedients bring relief.

PHILIPS.

The cultivation of religious feeling, said the Vicar, should be carefully maintained by females in every state and condition of life. However dignified piety may appear in our sex, it never assumes so pleasing an aspect as in yours; and I believe, the amelioration of many existing evils might be effectually promoted by the unremitting attention and influence of the most amiable part of the community. Were the rising generation led to perceive, that

"Man at home, within himself, can find
The Deity immense, and in that frame,
So fearfully, so wonderfully made,
See and adore his providence and power,"

How many of them would say with the energetic impulse of genuine devotion, combined with the ardent enthusiasm of youthful feeling—

I see, and I adore, O God most bounteous!
O infinite of goodness and of glory!

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The knee that thou hast shaped shall bend to Thee,
The tongue which thou hast tuned shall chaunt thy
praise;
And thine own image, the immortal soul,
Shall consecrate herself to Thee for ever.

SMART.

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CONVERSATION XIII.

Remarks on the Tenets of the Ancient Philosophers, as connected with the Truths of Revealed Religion.

AMONGST the subjects which present themselves to the enquirer after truth, said Charles, the doctrines of the ancient philosophers are not the least interesting. To mark the advancement of the perceptive faculties of man, unaided by the sacred emanations of Christianity, will, I think, furnish us with an agreeable evening's amusement.

Indications of the progressive existence of truth, said William, may be traced in the earliest ages of the world, and amongst the primitive doctrines of almost every nation. In subsequent periods, it seems to have been nearly extinct, or at least so

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combined with error, that it is with difficulty discoverable. Previously to Pythagoras, the first of the Greeks who devoted himself entirely to the attainment and communication of knowledge, the ideas which they appear to have entertained of a Supreme Being, would seem to have been derived originally from tradition, but so beclouded with the absurdities of paganism, that truth gleams very rarely amidst their delusions. But notwithstanding their polytheism, they had some idea of a Supreme God; and their Jupiter is sometimes stiled *The Omnipotent*, and acknowledged to have had the power, had he chosen to exert it, of controuling the Fates. To him was attributed the power of punishing injustice and rewarding virtue; and although at other times the most atrocious vices were imputed to him, it is not improbable but that this Jupiter, the son of Saturn, who, according to Hesiod, proceeded from the heavens and the earth, might be a different being from the original Jupiter, or at least have degenerated from the corruption of the minds of his worshippers.

The ideas which the Greeks appear to have entertained of Providence, in the time of Hesiod, said the Vicar, favour this opinion. 'It is Jupiter,'

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says this writer, 'who gives poverty to men, who raises up one and depresses another: he surrounds a good man with every blessing, good success, and freedom from folly.' According to Homer, he has two casks, one containing good and the other evil. 'Whatever good you do, ascribe it to the gods,' says Bias. 'It is difficult,' says Theognis, 'to know how a thing that is not finished will end, or how the gods will bring it about.' From these remains of antiquity, it is obvious that the truth originated in one common source, of which perhaps, Moses was the principal medium or agent. As the light of tradition receded, error advanced, and truth was more and more enveloped in obscurity; sometimes a radiant gleam appeared, but its irradiations only made the surrounding gloom more obvious, and the insufficiency of human reason or boasted intellect to conduct man to truth and happiness more apparent.

As Pythagoras, said Charles, did not commit his doctrines to writing, they can only be collected from the treatises of his disciples; and from these it appears, that he taught there was only one God, an incorruptible and invisible being, who ought to be worshipped with a pure

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mind. He considered the soul immortal, as he believed in its transmigration. Some of his tenets, it is probable, were borrowed from the Jews; as he travelled into Egypt previously to settling in Italy or Magna Græcia.

His division of the soul, said William, is ingenious though absurd, and deserves to be noticed. 'One part,' he says, according to Theages, 'has reason; another, anger; and the third, desire. The virtue of prudence belongs to the first part; fortitude to the second; temperance to the third, and justice is the virtue of the whole soul.'

'Science, and ancient and venerable philosophy,' says Pythagoras, 'free the mind from false and vain opinions and great ignorance, and raise it to the contemplation of heavenly things; in the knowledge of which, if a man so conduct himself as to be content with his lot and with the accidents of life, and thus aspire after a moderate and temperate life, he is in the way of true felicity.' 'But the souls of the idle shall be transmigrated into the bodies of women, murderers into wild beasts, light and rash into fowls, and the foolish into aquatic animals.' It is astonishing, continued William, in how little estimation women were formerly held. Solon, I

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believe, allowed them only three changes of raiment; and the Jews, at this day, thank heaven that they were born men rather than women.

I do not think this more astonishing, said Sophronia, than many other absurdities of the ancients. What can be more preposterous than the ideas they entertained of the structure of the world. 'God,' says Timoens, 'formed the world out of all kinds of matter. It is one, the only begotten, endued with a soul and reason. When God willed to produce a perfect offspring, he made this generated god, not to be perishable from any cause except by the God that made it. The world therefore remains as it was created by God, free from corruption and death. It is the best of all created things, since it arose from the best of causes. In this the Creator proposed to himself no model made by hands, but his own ideas and intelligible essence; according to which, when things are made with exquisite art, they are the most beautiful, and require not to be mended by any new operation.' 'God placed the soul in its centre, and also produced it externally.' Can any thing be more inconsistent with reason and common sense than such a system?

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The ideas of Pythagoras, said the Vicar, relating to Good and Evil, are more just, and in some respects, approach to the sublimity of Christianity. 'No gift of God,' says he, 'is greater than virtue. A frugal and poor philosopher lives a life like to that of God; and he considers it as the greatest wealth that he possesses nothing external, that is, out of his controul, nothing unnecessary. For the acquisition of riches inflames covetousness; but to live well and happily, nothing more is requisite than to act justly. Being born of God, and having our root in Him, we should adhere to it. For springs of water and the productions of the earth dry up or putrify, when cut off from their respective sources.* It is impossible that the same person should be addicted to pleasure or the acquisition

* By the way it may be observed, for the edification of such as object to the temperate and charitable discussion of religious topics, that those truths which have Heavenly and Eternal Justice for their source, cannot possibly be connected with sterile or corruptible effects, except when prematurely cut off and divided in their course, either by the active policy of fallible man, or the passive indolence to which our present nature is liable.

God said, Let man my endless blessings know!—
Vainly would man oppose their ceaseless flow.
While Heaven's decree remains, 'Let there be light!'
What mortal dare oppose his mimic night?

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of riches, and devoted to God; and though he should sacrifice hetacombs, he is the more impious and further removed from religion and God.' These sentiments are, without doubt, derived from a sacred source, and favour the opinion of those who suppose that Pythagoras was indebted to the Jews for some of his ideas respecting the Deity.

The sentiments of Socrates relative to the Divine Essence, are purer than either those of his predecessors or of his immediate followers. 'The Deity,' says he, 'sees and hears all things, is every where present, and takes care of all things.' Yet Socrates was a polytheist and an idolater; for on his trial he said, 'he had never sacrificed to or acknowledged, or sworn by, or even made mention of, any other gods, but Jupiter, Juno, and others that were received by his fellow-citizens.' 'Do I not believe,' says he, 'that the Sun and the Moon are gods as well as the others? Do we not suppose Demons to be gods, or the sons of gods?' And though he speaks of 'one God, who constructed and preserves the world,' he does not say that he was the only God.

From these sentiments of the most enlightened of the heathen philosophers, we may judge of the degree of darkness in which they were im-

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mersed, and of the insufficiency of reason, without the aid of Revelation, to conduct the best-endowed mind to truth, or to enable it throw off the shackles of error.

The opinion of Socrates, said Sir Edward, in regard to the formation of the world, was much superior to that entertained by Pythagoras. He considered that it was the work of a wise and and good God; and he delighted to point out the wisdom of Providence, as displayed in the structure of the human body, and as evident throughout creation. 'The gods,' says he, 'supply us, not only with necessaries, but with things that are adapted to give us pleasure.' 'When we see the power of the gods, we must reverence them, though we do not see them.' Pythagoras was very strict in regard to the observance of national religious rites. 'The Gods,' says he, 'are not to be honoured by every man as he pleases, but as the laws direct.' But it is well known that the heathen rites were scenes of licentiousness, instead of incitements to piety and virtue.

The moral sentiments of Socrates, said Charles, are admirable. 'There is no better way to true glory,' says the philosopher, 'than to endeavour

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to be good rather than seem so.' His opinion of the moral government of the world, and of a future state of retribution, was obscure, and is scarcely definable. But upon the whole, Socrates has left us the most excellent sentiments of wisdom and virtue, of any of the ancients, and deserves to stand high in the scale of friends to the human species. Rousseau, in his comparison between Socrates and our Divine Legislator, has this remark: 'Ah! if the life and death of Socrates carry the marks of a sage, the life and death of Jesus proclaim a God.'

Plato, the disciple of Socrates, said William, like Pythagoras, travelled in quest of knowledge. He appears to have given a preference in his writings to the term god, though he frequently uses the expression gods; but the former appears always in his serious epistles. 'The Good' is the general epithet he applies to the Supreme Being, whom he considers as incapable of dispensing evil—'the beginning, the middle, the end, and the supporter of all things,' who 'is always accompanied by justice, and punishes those who depart from the divine law.' 'Nothing' says he, 'is so like God as a good man: he is the most sacred of all things;' and 'no

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person persists in the disbelief of the gods, from youth to old age.' 'How could bodies of such magnitude as the sun and stars perform their circuits without God? God is the cause of this, and there cannot be any other.'

Hesiod, one of the most ancient authors of the Greeks, said Charles, considered that the world had been from eternity, and that the origin of the gods was subsequent to it. Socrates ascribed its formation to a god, and Plato believed it 'was constructed by the Supreme Being, without the instrumentality of any subordinate being, according to a pattern of it previously formed in his own mind.' But his account of the ideas in the Divine mind are very confused and unintelligible. He conceived the stars to be animated, and entitled to the rank of gods. 'The divine race of stars,' says he, 'must be considered as celestial animals, with most beautiful bodies and happy blessed souls; and that they have souls is evident from the regularity of their motions.' He appears also to consider the Earth as a deity. 'For the same reason,' he adds, 'that a mother bears her children, the Earth has produced men. For it is the Earth and nothing

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else, that supplies them with food, as having itself produced them.'

Plato, said the Vicar, believed in the pre-existence and the immortality of the soul. 'The soul existed,' he says, 'before bodies were produced, and it is the chief agent in the changes and the ornament of the body.' 'It behoves man to understand how many sensations are united in one; and this is the recollection of what the soul, when in a state of perfection with God, saw before.' 'The mind is all that we can call ourselves, and the body attends it; it is only after death, when it has got rid of the clog of the body, that we can see what the soul really is, whether compound or simple, and the whole of its condition.' 'It cannot die by any affection of the body, but only of some disorder peculiar to itself. For death is to it a freedom from every evil. Since then neither the death of the body nor its own depravity can destroy the soul, it must be immortal.'

Such were the ideas entertained by Plato respecting the soul. Like other heathen philosophers, he was a strenuous advocate for the religion of his country, considering a proper attention to it as necessary to the well-being of the commu-

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nity at large. He highly condemned the sentiments in the poems of Homer and Hesiod, which were calculated to excite in youth disrespect for the immortal gods. On the subjects of virtue and vice, and in his belief in the being and providence of God, and a future state of retribution, he comes nearer the doctrines of Revelation than any other philosopher of his class. He observes that neither pleasure nor wisdom are to be ranked with things that are absolutely good, because what is good is perfect and sufficient in itself.' Aristotle, Plato's disciple, said that 'some kinds of good related to the soul and the virtues, and some to the body, as health, beauty, and other external things;' and that 'he must be pronounced happy who was both virtuous and possessed of other external goods.'

Aristotle, in his works, said Charles, speaks of God in the singular number only; observing, that 'God is a most powerful being, immortal and of perfect virtue, and though by nature invisible to all perishable things, he is seen in his works, as in the air, in the earth, and in the water; for whatsoever is done in them, is the work of God.' 'There is,' he continues, 'but one God, though he has obtained many names, according to his

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different attributes.' Aristotle does not ascribe divinity to the celestial bodies, for the reason that 'God conducts the stars according to their number.' His ideas of Providence, as derived from an old tradition, are just: 'Every thing was made by God and out of God, and nothing can be well or safely conducted without his care and good providence.' His own opinions respecting the divine operations are not so consistent, though in many respects they are superior to what might be supposed, considering the little light he enjoyed. 'The soul,' he says, 'is divisible into two parts—that which has reason and that which is without reason. In the part which has reason, are the virtues of prudence, wisdom, genius, memory, &c. But in the part which has not reason, are temperance, fortitude, justice, and whatever else is praiseworthy in the class of virtues; since on account of these we are deemed worthy of praise.'

The sect of the Stoics founded by Zeno, was, I believe, said George, the next among the Greeks. It was soon opposed by that of Epicurus, who taught that the enjoyment of pleasure was the great end of life. The stoics considered that pleasure or pain were things

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indifferent. Both of these sects had their adherents; but the most eminent of the Romans, as Cato, Seneca, and Marcus Antonius, were among the stoics.

I should have much pleasure, said Harriet, in being informed of the principal tenets of the Stoics.

And I, said William, shall have equal pleasure in communicating all the information in my power upon that subject.

It was firmly believed by the stoics, and before them by Socrates, that a principle of intelligence, wisdom and benevolence, directed the affairs of the world—that it was diffused amongst intelligent agents, and even among men. The soul of man, they considered, flowed from the Deity, and would return to him again, as a drop of water, detached for a time from its source, is absorbed again in the ocean; consequently, its separate existence and separate consciousness vanished at death, and only existed as united in the principle from whence it was derived. Man, they supposed, consisted of three parts, viz. body, animal life, and the intellectual principle, which was the noble and immaterial part of man, and

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which, according to them, ought to be independent of every thing foreign to itself, and rest only upon itself for happiness, but at the same time be submissively resigned to the Supreme Will. 'Man,' says Marcus Antonius, 'should do nothing but what God himself would approve; and he should receive willingly whatever he assigns him.' Speaking of death, he says, 'If every thing be ordered by Providence, I venerate the Supreme Ruler, and depending upon him, am unmoved.' This is a sublime idea; but on the contrary, the Stoics entertained notions which are as distinguishable for absurdity. They were of opinion that after a certain number of years, every thing would return to its original state, independently of progressive improvement—that happiness depended entirely on themselves, and consisted greatly in their 'behaving with becoming indifference towards children, wife, magistrates, the rich, &c.' In thus repressing the best and noblest feelings of our nature, did they in some respect consider the real superiority of man to consist.

I am very glad to hear this remark from you, William! said Sophronia, as it is an acknowledgment that you are of a different opinion.

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Stoical indifference, Sophronia! I do not desire to possess. That magnanimity of conduct which results from a proper regulation of the mind and its affections, is inimical to, and inconsistent with, the cold feeling and general apathy which would admit the degree of indifference which the ancients prescribed. Man, as a social being, must ever be greatly dependant on others for happiness. He who shuts himself up, as it were, in his own breast, and will not permit his heart to expand in the sweets of benevolence and of social intercourse, must deprive himself of the best delights of our nature, and be incapable of any but selfish feelings and contracted views.

The ideas, said Charles, which the stoics entertained of virtue, doubtless combined absurdity with grandeur. Seneca observes, that 'the stoics endeavoured to raise men at once to the highest pitch of excellence;' but their notions of virtue and happiness were inconsistent with the nature of man and his situation in society. 'Little things,' it is true, 'affect light minds;' but no things are little when the happiness of others depends on them. 'There is no retirement so complete,' says Marcus Antonius, 'as that into one's own mind, especially if it be well

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stored with maxims, by the consideration of which it may attain perfect tranquillity.' 'When you are alone,' says Arian, 'God is within you.' 'Such as the Deity is, such will be those who endeavour to please him. If he be faithful, they will be so. If he be beneficent, they will be so. If he be magnanimous, they will be so.' 'There is no good man without God,' said Seneca.

It also appears that amongst the common people, great attention was paid to the observance of religious duties. 'No person,' says Arian, 'leaves a port without sacrificing to the Gods; nor do husbandmen sow without invoking Ceres. Would any person who should neglect such duties be safe?' These sentiments convey reproach to many who assume the name of Christian. In the following sentence, there is a mixture of sublimity and absurdity, truth and arrogance: 'A good man differs from God only in respect to time. He is his disciple, his emulator and true offspring, whom he educates with severity to prepare him for himself; but no real evil can befal a good man. God is not superior to man in happiness, but only in time.' To speak of the Deity as so nearly resembling man, is shocking and presumptuous. 'Compassion is a vice of the mind. In the view

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of the miseries of others, a wise man will relieve a person that weeps, but he will not weep with him: he will relieve the distressed, but without feeling compassion.' How much superior and more consistent with reason and nature, are the doctrines of the Gospel! A variety of quotations might be made from the writings of the ancients, of still greater absurdity; but I wished to exhibit unassisted reason in the best point of view. From a slight attention, however, to this subject, we may perceive that the most sublime notions of the ancients respecting the Deity, his nature, attributes, and perfections, had a superior origin to human reason. When man, unaided by any other light than that which he derives from himself or the exertion of his intellectual faculties, has established systems or considered the nature of things in general, how inconsistent and unharmonious have been his conclusions! What is so ridiculous as Epicurus's opinion of the universe proceeding from a fortuitous concourse of atoms—of the materiality of the soul, which, according to him, consisted of 'the smallest and roundest particles, to be dispersed when the body died?' Such ideas are too preposterous to engage our attention; they serve, however, to excite our gratitude for being brought into

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existence at a time when the glorious emanations of divine truth, resulting from the revealed will of God, make plain the path to eternal life, for all who choose to pursue it.

It is much to be lamented, that amongst Christian professors of different denominations, so little liberality should exist. Every true Christian should endeavour to dispel the mists of prejudice, and enlarge the views of his sect or associates; and this can be best effected by a more intimate acquaintance with God, his word, his works, and providence. Heaven gave not man his intellectual faculties to be either obscured by prejudice, abused by uncharitableness, or shackled by the assumptions of pedantry.

The superiority of the Gospel Dispensation, faid the Vicar, is so apparent, that it appears to me an insult to the mental character of man to offer any remarks on the elucidation of what must be obvious to the most limited capacity. Men of the most superior understanding, it is said, have been infidels; but their infidelity was a certain proof that they wanted a yet higher degree of superiority, to enable them to form a judgement consistently with reason, truth, and the good of mankind. I believe it would appear

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upon strict enquiry, that men who have bent their whole mental energies upon one particular branch of learning or science, unconsciously acquire the habit of treating all subjects indiscriminately with the same dictatorial air. As frail mortals, if they are not ambitious to be Christians, it would better become them to sacrifice so much of their scholastic pride at the shrine of Nature's truth, as might save their reputation from the charge of insulting an All-bountiful Creator by this exclusive claim to wisdom and common sense.

The ancients had no idea of a resurrection, and entertained very confused notions of the immortality of the soul. These consolatory tidings remained for announcement by our Divine Legislator, in that inexhaustible source of knowledge and invulnerable truths, the Bible.

A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic, like the Sun;
It gives a light to every age—
It gives, but borrows none.
Let everlasting praise be thine,
For such a bright display,
As makes a world of darkness shine
With beams of heavenly day.

COWPER.

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CONVERSATION XIV.

Observations on the Moral Government of the Deity, and the general Design of Providence.

IN whatever point of view we consider man, said Charles, whether as belonging to the material, the moral, or the intellectual world, his nature, situation and destination are matters of the highest importance, and deserve our particular attention. Man has for his instruction three distinct books, which it is his interest as well as his duty to study attentively; the book of nature, of providence, and of divine revelation. The study of either would enable us to discern truth; but nothing short of an intimate acquaintance with the three can display her, in all her lustre, to our thereby invigorated sight.

" To me be Nature's volume wide display'd,
And to peruse its all-instructing page

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My sole delight; as through the falling glooms
Pensive I stray, or with the rising dawn
On Fancy's eagle-wings excursive soar."

The study of nature, said the Vicar, opens to us so many sources of instruction and delight, and is so particularly calculated to impart pleasure to the youthful mind, that there are few reflecting persons who have not felt themselves raised to devotional fervour by a survey of the Deity in the beauties of creation.

" By swift degrees the love of Nature works,
And warms the bosom; till at last sublim'd
To rapture and enthusiastic heat,
We feel the present Deity."

Attention to the moral government of God, in the subordinate operations of his providence, is not so early excited in the mind, as observations upon the works of nature, although no less calculated to elevate our souls to devout admiration and grateful love. Happy is the person who can say with Mrs. Barbauld—

If friendless in a vale of tears I stray,
Where briars wound, and thorns perplex my way,
Still let my steady soul thy goodness see,
And with strong confidence lay hold on Thee—
With equal eye my various lot receive,
Resign'd to die, or resolute to live;
Prepared to kiss the sceptre or the rod,
While God is seen in all—and all in God.

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A conviction of the moral government of the Deity, said Mrs. Wentworth, is so intimately connected with our rational sources of happiness, that we cannot have too firm a confidence in this grand, this influential and important truth; and when combined with a knowledge and admiration of nature, it must have a very prevailing effect upon our habits and dispositions.

"With Thee in shady solitudes I walk,
With Thee in busy crowded cities talk,
In every creature own thy forming power,
In each event thy providence adore,
From anxious cares and gloomy terrors free,
And feel myself omnipotent in Thee.
Teach me to fix my ardent hopes on high,
And having lived to Thee, to Thee to die."

Man preys upon man, said Sir Edward, and suffers in every situation of life from the vices, follies, or weaknesses of his fellow-creatures; yet this diversified scene of action is well suited to his nature, and favourable to his progressive advancement in knowledge and virtue. Severe as are sometimes the sufferings we endure from the malignity of others, they are trifling in comparison with those that would arise from similar conduct in ourselves. The All-wise Regulator having affixed laws to mind, which are invariable

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in their ultimate effects, virtue is finally productive of happiness, vice of misery, and even in this life benevolence is always pleasant, whilst malice is ever painful. Therefore, whatever may be our situation, our talents or attainments, from the constitution of things we are furnished with continual means of improvement; since even the vices and follies of others may generate in our minds virtues which will ennoble our nature, and advance us in the scale of intellect and morality.

We cannot doubt the goodness of the Deity, said Henry; but how can we reconcile the diversity of his gifts to man with divine justice and impartiality?

In erecting a building, replied Sir Edward, the workmen have a variety of tools and different materials, which they employ at pleasure: had they materials of only one kind and shape, it would be impossible to form an edifice of grace and beauty. The same observation may be extended to the regulations of Providence in the obvious diversity existing amongst mankind. If all men possessed equal talents, wealth, or personal qualifications, the means of improvement

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would cease to present themselves, and society could no longer exist.

"A diversity and subordination of intellectual accomplishments is no less necessary to the order and good government of society, than a subordination of rank and fortune." The various gradations that constitute the great whole, render the continual fluctuations and changes in the present scene of things calculated to promote the extended and final dissemination of good. The capacity of man is too limited to survey extensively the grand designs of the Deity. It is only by contemplating the unlimited perfections of Creative Power that we are enabled to look beyond second causes, and view in the primary source of animal and intellectual being, the governor and regulator as well as the disposer and origin of all. But

"To attain
The heights and depths of God's eternal ways,
All human thoughts come short."

Proofs of the moral government of the Deity, said the Vicar, may be adduced from his perfections, the relation he bears to the world as its creator, and to his creatures as their father, as well as from the regulations of the material world. "If in the first constitution of things," says Cappe, in his

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Discourses on Providence, "God has provided for the regular and useful operation of material and inanimate causes, and for the welfare of his sensible creation, according to their respective natures, characters, dispositions, and situation; if he has so ordered the progress of events as to produce the best final issue, and, in the mean time, the greatest general felicity; or if not, having established such an order and series of events at first, he governs the world by a constant superintendance and unremitted agency, actuating, guiding, and over-ruling all things, to the gracious purposes of his own benevolence; he maintains the character of a wise Creator and a tender Father. If we deny this doctrine, we must assert both irreverently and absurdly, that there are some of his creatures whose excellencies reproach their Creator's character, that he might learn a lesson of wisdom and of goodness from his works."

We cannot doubt, said Charles, but that such a providence, government, or agency, exists, although 'the manner in which it is exercised is undiscovered.' It is frequently exemplified by particular occurrences in the lives of individuals. When we survey the general designs

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of providence, as connected with the nature, attributes, and perfections of the Deity, we must be assured that he who called us into existence by the operation of his power, to promote his glory in the increase of intelligent beings, wills our happiness, and affords us every necessary means to advance us in the scale of sensible creation.

In the constitution of the present scene of things, 'it must needs be that offences come; but woe unto them by whom they come!' The malignant propensities of that unhappy order of beings whom we have arranged under the malevolent class, may generate the virtues of patience, fortitude, forbearance, and other happy disposions, in the minds of those persons against whom the shafts of their malignity are more particularly levelled. The possession of superior wealth, rank, and talents, are necessarily connected with many external disadvantages. The envied possessors of them are placed as it were on an eminence, as marks at which malevolence may direct the poisoned arrows of calumny. Innocence, towering in native exaltation, smiles at the attempts of low-minded Envy, and views with pity and contempt the inviduous endeavours of designing Hypocrisy, to reduce to the same standard with

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themselves, those whom, by this involuntary tribute to excellence, they acknowledge to be their superiors.

Happy, said Sir Edward, are those persons who view unmoved this passing scene, and who attain, particularly in early life, that exaltation of character which proceeds from just perceptions, well-regulated affections, and habitual propriety and rectitude of conduct—whose capacity of viewing the Deity in the perceptible operations of nature is enlarged by scientific knowledge and attentive observation—who accustom themselves to regard the various incidents of life in association with the will of Infinite Benevolence, and dependent on the great first cause, the primeval source of all things.

The favoured percipients of such exalted views, relying on the goodness and ineffable mercy of unbounded beneficence, are convinced that from the perfection of his nature he can will only happiness—that the moral evil which he permits is combined with the good which he designs, and is calculated, by the diversity of its operations, to promote the attainment of those virtues which can only produce happiness, and the unfolding and developement of those facul-

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ties that lead to its more extended dissemination. Happy would it be for mankind if the professors of Christianity, of every sect and denomination, would call forth the energies of their minds, and exercise every talent with which they are endowed, not so much in endeavours to lay open to the ridicule of those who know not God in the world, their mutual fallibility, as in looking outward among their less-informed brethren of mankind, to promote the common cause of Christ's kingdom, as the most effectual means of increasing their own happiness here, and securing the best title to a glorious hereafter.

Belief in the moral government of the Deity, and implicit resignation to his divine will, can support us under the most afflictive dispensations of his providence, certain that his

> "Unremitting energy pervades,
> Adjusts, sustains, and agitates the whole."

With unbounded confidence we resign ourselves into his hands, and derive our chief felicity from the conviction of his omniscient goodness;

> Alike unmoved when painful trials rise,
> If Virtue points to bliss beyond the skies,
> Where no tormenting passions cloud the scene,
> But all around is peaceful, calm, serene.

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The advantage we derive from revelation, said the Vicar, is clearly obvious in the subject of our last evening's conversation. The intellectual faculties of man cannot pierce the gloom of native ignorance, unaided by divine truth. The reasoning powers should be carefully cultivated, but not raised to an insubordinate rank: they are to lead us to an acquaintance with ourselves, our situation, and our Maker, and not to be placed above divine revelation.

'There is nothing in Christianity inconsistant with reason.' 'Reason and religion,' says Mrs. More, in her Essay on the Character of St. Paul, 'accord as completely in practice as in principle; and as there is nothing in Christian belief, so there is nothing in Christian practice, but what is consonant to views purely rational.' Revelation is the touchstone upon which Reason sharpens her powers. Truth is harmoniously blended and combined in the diversified blessings which the Deity has bestowed upon man.

Let it be our constant endeavour

To search for Truth, to seek her radiant form
Through transient matter's ever varying shape,
To view her riding on the raging storm,
Or trace her in the vast and awful deep;

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But chiefly prize the emanating ray
That guides our souls to Heaven's eternal day.

Allow me, said Charles, to repeat a short Ode to Truth, which may best apologize for its scanty poetical merit, in the sincerity of its aspirations after the blessings of her influence.

Oh! for one bright celestial ray
Of Truth, to chase the gloom away
Of Error's wide domain—
One sacred beam, one radiant spark,
To gild our path, disperse each dark
Delusion from the brain.

Resplendent Truth! thy light diffuse,
As on thy heavenly form I muse,
And raise my soul to thee.
Oh! let me consecrate my days:
Teach me to tune thy matchless praise,
In mental liberty.

I ask not wealth, nor power, nor fame,
To trace thee under every name;
Be this my only wish,
My best delight, my sweet employ:
To chase from thee each base alloy,
Shall constitute my bliss.

Within thy bowers, celestial Truth!
I'd spend the short remains of youth,
And every future hour.
Thus consecrated unto thee,
O manifest thyself to me,
In thy resplendent power!

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So may I cull thy flowers that spring
About life's path, and incense bring,
  Their fragrance cast around,
To all mankind thy power confess;
Do thou thus every mortal bless,
  To earth's remotest bound!

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CONVERSATION XV.

Observations on the Rational Enjoyments of Life. Remarks on Decision of Character.

NOTHING, said the Vicar, can be more inimical to truth or inconsistent with the sublime doctrines and benevolent design of Christianity, than the gloomy notions frequently entertained of religion. The man who is not convinced that

> "Religion never was design'd
> To make our pleasures less,"

Cannot have experienced its cheering influence, nor have felt that sacred rapture which is the result of a clear though distant view of the Deity. Wafted on beams of fervent devotion, the soul regains at times its native home, feels a foretaste of the beatitude of etherial being, and

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exults in the delightful prospect of an emancipation from the fetters of mortality.

The professors of Christianity, said Sir Edward, are often, though doubtless unconsciously, greater enemies to the diffusion of its blessings, than open infidels. What unsophisticated observer can imagine that the gloomy despondency of a melancholy countenance, the sigh of discontent, or the murmur of dissatisfaction, should proceed from a mind satisfied with its choice, and happy in the view of a blessed futurity?

Religion and learning, said Mrs. Osbourne, have been alike retarded in their progress by the general conduct of many of their professors. While religion wears the garb of melancholy, and scholastic acquisitions are displayed with insulting ostentation, can we suppose that the young, the sprightly, and the prosperous, will renounce their pleasures, enjoyments, or gratifications, to enrol themselves amongst the number? But let sacred Truth unveil the beauties of Science, and present Religion to our view in her pure, native lustre, and every mind which is not lost to the capability of beholding their charms, must be

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anxious to form one of the happy number of those to whom they can never fail to impart light, peace, and felicity.

Religion, said the Vicar, does not prevent us from enjoying any of the rational pleasures of life. It permits us to gather the flowers which Heaven has kindly permitted to spring up in the path of our duty, but restrains us from plucking those only which are environed by the thorns of pain and misery, forbidding repose in the life-consuming bowers of luxury and sloth.

The Creator, who invested us with senses superior in number, and probably in degree, to the rest of animal creation, gave us also means for their more exquisite gratification. A walk in the fields or in a garden not only revives us by the invigorating freshness of the atmosphere, but charms our sight by the luxuriance of the foliage and the variegated beauties of the gay parterre; while at the same time the fragrant perfumes of the opening flowers impart agreeable sensations; not to mention the choir of feathered songsters, who delight the ear with their harmonious warbling, attuning, in strains of artless melody, the praises of their bounteous Maker. How cold to feeling, how dead to the most

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exquisite enjoyments of a rational soul, is the mind that has not participated, by its responsive vibrations, in Nature's chorus to her pristine source!

In the most distressing situations in life, said Sir Edward, the man who is accustomed to trace the Great First Cause in the secondary effects of His will, derives consolation from the conviction of omniscient goodness. Beholding in the Creator, a father who regards his family on earth as a great whole, of which he himself forms an insignificant part, he is convinced 'that every material being is disposed the best that is possible with respect to the whole; and every intelligent and sensible being, the best that is possible with respect to itself.'

Accuse not Nature: she has done her part;
Do thou but thine, and be not diffident
Of Wisdom: she deserts not thee, if thou
Dismiss not her, when most thou need'st her might.

MILTON.

One cause, said Charles, of the erroneous opinions we are frequently led to conceive of the moral government of the Deity, is the misconception of what really constitutes good and evil.

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We naturally imagine that only to be good which contributes to the increase of our external advantages, comforts, and enjoyments; and that evil consists in deprivations, distress, and disappointment. If good were considered in a more extended view, and its zenith perceived to be in our nearest possible advancement to the moral perfection of the divine attributes, we should possess juster ideas of Providence and the general nature of things. No longer should we murmur at the dispensations of Heaven, or dare to arraign at the bar of our presumptuous and finite reason, the goodness that permits the just man to sink under oppression, and the innocent to suffer through the machinations of the guilty. We should no longer wonder that a Being infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness, allows the malevolent class of society to strew with thorns the path of the superior order of beings; since this may be a means of advancing them in the scale of intellect and morality, and of effectually promoting their real good and final happiness.

The cultivation of intellect and devotional feeling is of advantage to the individual in every situation, every state of society, and every period of life.

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Mind, said Sir Edward, will have dominion. It subjugates in youth the impetuosity of tumultuous passions, restrains the imperious inclinations of manhood, and enables us patiently to endure the pains and infirmities of age. At all times, however,

" 'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past years,
And ask them what report they bore to Heaven,
And how they might have borne more welcome news.
Their answers form what men experience call."

When we consider the powers of mind, said the Vicar—its extended influence and capability of controuling every sensation inimical to its dominion, we must be astonished that it is not more justly appreciated, and that greater care is not bestowed on its cultivation. Divest a man of the fortuitous advantages derived from wealth and rank, and, independently of the cultivation of his mind, in how few instances will he be superior to the uncultured beings whom he now beholds approximating to the material world! The pride of talent, of erudition, of birth or fortune, ill becomes the children of mortality, who hold their advantages on so frail a tenure as health, life, and the vicissitudes attendant on this state of being; but

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Mind, mind alone,
The living fountains in itself contains
Of beauteous and sublime. To man alone
Creative Wisdom gave to lift his eye
To Truth's eternal measure; hence to frame
The sacred laws of action and of will,
Discerning justice from malignant deeds,
And temperance from folly. AKENSIDE.

It is unquestionably true, that

Him purest happiness attends,
Who Heaven's distinguish'd gifts employs,
With steadfast wisdom, to the noblest ends.
BOSCAWEN.

The knowledge of mind is the most difficult, the most important, and at the same time the foundation of all learning that is truly valuable, and of every acquisition connected with the well-being of man.

The trials and afflictions of life, said Mrs. Osbourne, are the means generally used by Providence to lead us to a more intimate acquaintance with ourselves, and a greater dependance on the Divine Agency.

The Almighty will reign supreme in the soul, and be beloved before all things; and therefore whatever temporal object gains an undue ascendancy over our affections, the idol, whatever it

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may be, must be torn from our heart, that he who created us for himself may hold the first place in our affections.

This remark is daily verified in life, said Lady Berine. A too tenderly beloved child is torn from the arms of his doating parents. The most affectionate partners are frequently the soonest dissevered. Friends who live as it were but for each other, are either separated by circumstances, or the treacherous serpent steals into the asylum of bliss, the abode of tranquility and happiness, and impregnates it with the venom of malice or masked designs of hypocrisy.

Every temporal blessing, to yield the most salutary enjoyments, should be held in subordination to the will of directing Heaven.

"A soul immortal, spending all her fires,
Thrown into tumult, raptur'd or alarm'd
At aught this scene can threaten or indulge,
Resembles ocean into tempest wrought,
To waft a feather or to drown a fly."

There is no attainment of character, said Mrs. Wentworth, of greater importance, or which should be more carefully cultivated in early life, than that of decision. By decision of character

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I do not mean that inflexible adherence to our own opinions and determinations which distinguishes the obstinate and the ignorant; but that steady firmness of conduct which should result from established principles, and an undeviating regard to rectitude and propriety. The cold resolution which refuses to extend the hand of philanthropic love and generous kindness to prevent the sufferings of an offending fellow-creature, is not that inflexible adherence to the rule of right which characterises a superior mind. In the common occurrences of life, we should seriously deliberate and weigh the probable consequences of our actions, before we decide; but when we have decided, it is a proof of great weakness to suffer ourselves to be influenced by the opinion of others, unless they convince our judgement. Instability is the natural preventative of excellence in every point of view. Indecision prevents success. Whilst we deliberate and waver, the golden opportunity may be lost.

Proper decision, said the Vicar, should be carefully distinguished from self-will and obstinacy. It does not proceed from a determination to adhere to a mode of conduct which is only influenced by our own opinions or will, but

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should be directed by the laws of God. If we possess principles founded in integrity and truth, nothing should induce us to swerve from the conduct they prescribe. In many instances our deviation in a small degree might appear likely effectually to promote our temporal advantage; but every advantage is purchased at too dear a rate, that requires even the smallest sacrifice of our principles. How many persons have been led from one deviation to another, until vice has usurped the mind over which virtue once presided!

Youth has thus treasured up thorns to pierce the breast of manhood, and embitter with painful regret every subsequent period of life.

Decision of character, said Mrs. Osbourne, is as necessary to be acquired by women as by men; and a firm adherence to their principles should characterize equally both sexes. Indecision is a certain proof of imbecility. Weakness and obstinacy are combined with ignorance and folly. The most firm characters in important matters are frequently the most complying and condescending in unimportant and trivial concerns.

We commonly find that persons who possess

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the most superior understandings and cultivated minds are generally the most easy and agreeable in domestic life, and yield with less reluctance their inclinations and wishes to the gratification of their associates, than characters of an inferior standard; while at the same time, in their intercourse with the world, they possess the most unbending inflexibility, where their principles or ideas of right are involved with their conduct.

In acting with decision, said Sir Edward, we should take care not only that our conduct is influenced by proper motives, but that they should appear so to others. An open, candid, honourable conduct, is a proof of good intentions; while that which carries with it an appearance of mystery, naturally excites suspicion as to the purity and integrity of the motives which occasion it.

We should be careful, said Mrs. Osbourne, in judging of the motives that influence the conduct of others; since so many circumstances with which we may be unacquainted will render that behaviour which appears reprehensible, not only justifiable, but meritorious.

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Happy is it for those persons, said the Vicar, who steadily determine to pursue the path of their duty, disregarding the allurements and temptations they meet therein, and who, persevering in the advancement of their intellectual and moral standard, seek to make every obstacle that impedes their comforts and enjoyments, as well as those comforts and enjoyments themselves, subservient to their real improvement in virtue and progress in the scale of intelligent beings!

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CONVERSATION XVI.

Observations on the Causes of the Diversity of Mental Power in the Human Species.

OUR contemplation of man, said Charles, as a part of the material world, opens to us a clear view of the origin of our sensations and ideas—the means by which general knowledge is attained. In infancy and childhood, we are merely impressed by sensible objects, and impelled to action by their impression and influence. The number and succession of the ideas we acquire, enable us to lay up a store of delicious food, upon which the mind can feast at pleasure, and which affords to the child of intellect a never-failing source of the most salutary gratification. I should be happy, this evening, to enquire a little more particularly into the nature of the intellectual powers, or the manner in

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which the soul operates, to occasion the diversity of natural ability discernible in early life; or to ascertain, if possible, the causes to which the difference of mental capacity may be attributed.

You are so fond of metaphysical enquiries, Charles! said Harriet, that you present us more frequently with dull disquisitions than with agreeable and pleasant sources of amusement.

My dear sister! replied Charles, I am quite at your service, to follow where you will condescend to lead, being ready to attend to any other subject that you may propose.

I cannot presume to suggest one, replied Harriet; but those dry subjects which are almost incomprehensible are never interesting or agreeable.

But if we endeavour to render them so, replied William, by reducing them, if possible, to a level with the understanding of the fair-sex, I hope you will no longer object to their discussion.

In the first place, said Sophronia, you will do

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well to point out the real difference that exists between the natural understanding of men and of women, before you assume so vast a superiority over those who possess equal natural powers of observing, reflecting, and judging, with yourselves.

I have succeeded at last, replied William, in drawing another retort from Sophronia. I had almost despaired of ever again being honoured with such a distinction.

Those who search for truth, William! replied Sophronia, should beware of abusing the privileges of reason, by perverting them to the gratification of their own vanity, prejudice, or pride.

The prerogatives of the ladies, said William, certainly entitle them to an unrestrained liberty of speech. We have only to bow and silently acquiesce, when we are not inclined to take the trouble of confutation.

In amusing ourselves, replied Sophronia, with the endeavour to confute truth, we may accelerate the progress of those errors and prejudices which

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we ought to lessen, and as much as possible extirpate. The pride of man has too long clouded his reason, diminished his rational sources of happiness, and prevented him from enjoying those exquisite and refined gratifications which his Maker rendered him capable of partaking, in creating for him a mind, possessed of equal intellectual powers, but invested with greater delicacy, refinement and susceptibility than his own.

> Not from his head was woman took,
> As made her husband to o'erlook;
> Not from his feet, as one design'd
> The footstool of the stronger kind;
> But fashion'd for himself, a bride,
> An equal, taken from his side.
>
> JOHN WESLEY.

My dear children! said the Vicar, in entering upon that inexhaustible subject of disputation, the superiority of the sexes, we open a field for argument more than for edification. If women wish to be considered upon an equal footing with ourselves, let them assiduously endeavour to cultivate their understanding, that they may be able to impart such a degree of improvement to the rising generation as shall diminish the empire of prejudice and ignorance; this being

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the only effectual means by which their rational equality can be permanently established.

As the enquiry proposed, said Sir Edward, relative to the original cause of the diversity of character, may enable us more clearly to comprehend the elementary parts of the science of mind; and as the theory of the gradations of intellect, as well as the combining scale of morality which Charles has suggested, prove that he has paid some attention to the subject, I am the more desirous to hear his observations; though I must confess that I do not see how they can impart any additional light to this important though abstruse theme for investigation.

A very superficial degree of observation, said Charles, independently of any acquaintance with either anatomy, physiognomy, or the new topic of popular enquiry, Craniology, enables us to perceive the vast difference that exists in the external formation of the human head. An idiot or a person of very shallow capacity, may be easily known by his countenance, and particularly by the form or construction of his forehead. These are merely external indications, obvious to all, and not the nice distinctions displayed by science.

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Anatomy, or a knowledge of the construction of of the brain, discovers those variations of the physical organization which probably essentially contribute to the original strength of the intellectual powers. Unless the constitution of the mental faculties admits that degree of expansion which produces their full developement, no exertions of the individual can impart intellectual eminence, or engender superior natural capacity. A knowledge of the diversity of the effects occasioned by the difference in the organization of the human frame, has been a principal cause of the conflicting opinions that have been entertained by persons of scientific knowledge and superior mental attainments, respecting the materiality of the soul, as conceiving it to result from the intellectual faculties themselves. That the powers of mind depend greatly upon the physical organization of body, cannot be doubted; but to suppose that mind arises from that physical construction, is a conjecture inconsistent with the truths of revelation, and incongruous with the perceptions and prerogatives of the promised immortality.

Whatever may be the organization of the individual, or the origin of the diversity of the

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intellectual powers, some cause unconnected with its formation is necessary to produce the play of those faculties; and this, we learn from Scripture, proceeds from a vital source, or an emanation of the Deity, which can exist independently of the body.

This principle or divine essence is doubtless the same originally in every individual, and the diversity of the effects it produces arises from the organization of the frame in which the soul is embodied. This hypothesis illustrates the cause of the natural difference discernible in mental capacities, and if the enquiry were carried farther, would undoubtedly elucidate the origin of the different propensities of youth, independently of education and the influence of social connexions.

When man, said the Vicar, suffers his enquiries to extend to subjects in some respects beyond the limited capacity of the human intellect, he may easily wander into the regions of error. The delusions of sophistry may be mistaken for the inferences of reason and the deductions of truth. There are no subjects that require more profound attention or a greater exertion of the intellectual powers, than metaphysical investigations; consequently not any are attended

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with greater difficulty in the research, or perhaps less general utility in their determination. The knowledge which is commonly acquired of mind, arises more frequently from casual observation, than from attention to the abstruse points of metaphysical theory, which are too dry to interest the greater part of the human species and excite that degree of attention which their importance demands.

The knowledge of *man*, said Charles, may be considered as the origin of all terrestrial knowledge. It divides itself into so many branches, that the life of an individual is scarcely sufficient for its complete attainment. It is the foundation of every science connected with the well-being of mankind, and gives birth to most of the arts which adorn civilized society.

An acquaintance with *mind*, its nature, diversity and effects, is of more real importance than is generally supposed, both in regard to education and our associations in life. By applying the same means to minds of different orders, much mental pain and external evil is frequently occasioned. The generous, noble, independent mind, which disdains the shackles of compulsion or the fetters of slavish restraint, readily yields to the mild

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commands of Reason, and feels inconceivable delight in submitting to the most painful deprivations or laborious exertion, if instigated by a generous motive; while minds of an inferior order, or those belonging to the fourth class, must be impelled by an interested principle. Generosity, disinterestedness, and the noble impulses of a superior mind, are peculiar to the three higher classes. Ingratitude, duplicity and the mean and sorded vices, belong in some degree to the fourth class, but particularly distinguish the malevolent order of beings.

The laws which relate to the constitution of the mind are invariable in their operations, and their dominion is as extensive and absolute as the most plain and obvious law of the material world. The immutable obligations of morality, the social feelings and benevolent affections, universally produce pleasure in their operation, and good in their effects. Vice, on the contrary, occasions pain and misery; and as the modifications of the principle of benevolence produce those active virtues which yield and diffuse happiness, so it is wisely established as the fundamental law of moral obligation, and the grand influential principle which prevails throughout every part of intelligent creation.

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"Whoever contemplates the nature of man," says Dr. Cogan, "his corporeal and mental powers, the superior structure of the human frame, and its peculiar adaptation to an infinitude of movements; the passions and affections of the mind, their specific objects and final causes; whoever attends to the diversity of our intellectual faculties and their peculiar adaptation to all the varieties and intricacies with which our personal and social interests are so frequently connected; whoever meditates upon the various portions of good adapted to our sensitive, rational, social, and moral nature, must be convinced, that the promotion of good, in its different kinds and degrees, is the grand principle in the Divine Mind, presiding over his infinitely diversified creation. The many troubles that surround us, the numerous circumstances that occasionally oppose or retard the grand design, cannot obscure the facts, that all animated beings are rendered capable of enjoying much good, and that much good is before them."

"As the enjoyment of good," continues the Doctor, "is clearly the grand principle by which all our thoughts and desires are directed; as the promotion of good is the grand object of the

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Divine Legislator, so it is in order to augment and extend this good that the uniform practice of virtue is enjoined upon mortals; and it was for this end that we were rendered moral agents by the great Author of our existence."

The better we are acquainted with the principles of action, the greater must be our knowledge of ourselves, and the more extended our means of imparting benefit to others.

One cause of the frequent errors of youth, said Mrs. Wentworth, is their ignorance of the nature and constitution of their minds. How few would be deluded by the enticements of pleasure, were they convinced that active and virtuous pursuits are essential to their happiness, and the best means to enable them to combat every propensity that is inimical to their rational enjoyments and final felicity!

"Did men but think, and oft to think they seem,
That from themselves their heaviest sorrows rise;
And knew they too, whence thus themselves create
Their bosom sufferings, seldom should we see
Life spent as now each passing hour pourtrays."

The more intimately we are acquainted with the operations of the Deity in the construction

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of our own minds, as well as with the regulations of the material world, the more plainly we shall discover that

> To all has Nature given a bound precise
> Of being and perfection, and promulg'd
> To every varying rank her varying laws,
> Urging to this—from that restraining firm.
>
> GOOD.

Happy, said Sophronia, is the youthful mind that devotes itself unreservedly to the best and noblest ends of our creation, assiduously endeavouring to raise itself to the highest degree of moral and mental elevation, consecrating the spring and summer of life to the service of the best of masters, and to the diffusion of good among his ignorant and unenlightened creatures!

> "With thee, serene Philosophy! with thee,
> And thy bright garland, let me crown my song;
> Effusive source of evidence and truth,
> A lustre shedding o'er th'ennobled mind,
> Stronger than summer-noon, and pure as that
> Whose mild vibrations soothe the parting soul,
> New to the dawnings of celesitial day."

In the spring and summer of life, said Mrs. Wentworth, we cannot too carefully sow the seeds and cultivate the plants from which we are to derive a rich and bountiful harvest. The laws

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of the moral, like those of the natural world, forbid us to expect a harvest from uncultured ground, or delicious fruit from trees which we consider undeserving of our attention. In early life, the seeds of knowledge must be sown, the passions must be regulated, and the virtues cultivated; otherwise we cannot enjoy an autumn of plenty, peace, and felicity.

A youth, said the Vicar, who is endowed naturally with warm and animated feelings, should be careful in yielding to the generous impulse of his mind; for many and bitter will be his disappointments during his intercourse with the world. The admonitions of Prudence should restrain the ardour of early impressions, and cull from experience the wisdom of mature observation.

Experience guards the mazy path of youth,
And teaches him to shun false Pleasure's bower;
To cull fair Wisdom from celestial Truth,
And rest upon a Just Unerring Power.

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CONVERSATION XVII.

Concluding Remarks, designed to promote a free and impartial Investigation of the Sovereign Good, or the best Interests of Man.

IN the discussion of our subject, said Sir Edward, the nature of good and evil, as connected with the possession of the virtues, the enjoyment of the pleasures, and the regulation of the passions, considered relatively to the attainments of character, we have in general confined ourselves to the proposed limits, and only in a few instances ventured to analyze principles. However, a knowledge of primeval causes must necessarily lead to a more intimate acquaintance with the nature of the effects they produce. In our investigation of good, we have merely considered it relatively, not positively. National good, and the means that might evidently

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promote its more extended dissemination, may have been superficially surveyed; but the principles of political institutions, on which the good of society is founded, have not engaged our attention. As members of a civilized community and belonging to a political body, it is only consistent with reason and our prerogatives as rational beings, that we should be acquainted with some of the common principles upon which civil contracts are formed. If agreeable to the ladies, I shall be happy, at a future period, to hear your remarks on the subject; for the reason that previous to the introduction of youth into the more active scenes of life, they should be acquainted with the elements of politics, as well as with those of other sciences which are less important to the general interests of mankind.

We shall certainly have much gratification, said Mrs. Osbourne, in attending to your observations on that subject; and although we may be unable to assist in the discussion, we shall doubtless be able to comprehend it, and derive a corresponding degree of edification; particularly as we know that

> There remains a freedom nobler far
> Than kings or senates can destroy or give,

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Beyond the proud oppressor's cruel grasp
Seated secure, uninjured, undestroy'd,
Worthy of gods—the freedom of the mind.

BARBAULD.

I have no doubt, said William, but Sophronia will be able to explore the profound labyrinth of political science, and display its elementary parts to our view with so much clearness and precision, that a female politician will be no longer a literary phenomenon.

If, replied Sophronia, I were inclined to devote my attention to a subject which, although it may be in some respects considered incompatible with the female character, is not above female comprehension, I suppose the same powers of mind that enable me to make a cap or a bonnet, and to comprehend the duty of moral obligations, would enable me to understand the principles on which the science of politics is founded; since they originate in the nature, constitution, wants, and vices of mankind.

I am sure, said William, that we should be much edified by your descanting on all these branches of the subject, with your accustomed liberality of sentiment towards our sex, and partiality for your own.

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As the science of politics, replied Sophronia, is peculiarly adapted to the duties of a man, I shall beg leave to decline making any observations thereupon. It is sufficient for a female to be acquainted with the fundamental principles of morality, which are the foundation of all civil institutions, and consequently of political science.

I cannot, said Sir Edward, consider the knowledge of the elements of any science incompatible with the female character; on the contrary, women cannot possess a too general stock of information. We know that the time will come, 'when the knowledge of the Lord shall overshadow the earth, as the waters overspread the deep.' This evinces the truth of the philosophical doctrine of the perfectibility of the human species; and as the palm of moral worth has been properly adjudged to the ladies, when they generally possess that cultivation of mind which imparts superiority to the intellectual character, the means of promoting the perfectibility of mankind will be greatly increased; and by the exertion of their influence, those evils which prevail so extensively may be effectively redressed.

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Illiberality, said Sophronia, must be diminished in proportion to the extension of knowledge; for 'liberality is a god-like virtue, and arises only from superior intelligence. Ignorance and illiberality are always found together.'

Illiberality, said Sir Edward, proceeds from prejudice, a narrow mind, or contracted views. Generosity, an enlarged mind, and extended conceptions, inspire liberality of sentiment. Local opinions and associations are frequently inimical to the diffusion of liberal principles. The little liberality with which women are sometimes treated, even by men of superior education, does not so frequently proceed from their own deficiency in liberal sentiments, or want of native delicacy or generosity, as from the contemptible opinion they may have imbibed of the female character. Considering women as inferiors in the order of nature, men do not conceive that they are equally entitled with themselves to the privileges of rationality. From this and every other consideration connected with the interest of the human species, the cultivation of reason in women must be a most effectual means of promoting the future well-being of mankind. The best and only true criterion of real regard, is

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that which seeks the good of its object; therefore every father whose bosom glows with the love of his country, independently of affection for his offspring, should assiduously endeavour to cultivate the minds of his daughters, as by this means he will best evince his patriotic desire to benefit posterity; and every Christian who is desirous of advancing the cause of true religion in the world, should recollect that by sowing the genuine seeds of piety and intellect in the bosoms of his female offspring, he will essentially promote the good of posterity, and serve his Maker by thus assisting to advance the kingdom of Christ amongst the children of this world.

Although a knowledge of politics, said Sophronia, may be considered inconsistent with the station and duties of woman, I hope there is no impropriety in quoting a sentiment of Epictetus (for which I am indebted to the erudition and industry of a female), for the instruction of those gentlemen who are desirous to promote the public good. 'You will serve your country,' says he, 'more by raising your souls than by enlarging the habitations of your fellow-citizens.'

Patriotic virtue, said Mrs. Osbourne, must

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glow with ardour in the bosom of every man who is susceptible of the best and noblest impulses of a generous, enlarged, and liberal mind.

> "In various ways
> To seek the public good, is virtue's praise."

The most effectual means, said Sir Edward, of promoting either individual, national, or general good, is to diminish ignorance and vice, and advance the cause of intellect and virtue.

> "Dare then to be wise;
> Begin! The man who still postpones the hour
> Of living well, is like the clown who waits
> Till the whole river shall have flow'd away.
> The rolling river glides before his eyes,
> And so shall glide for ever, and for ever."

Many faults are attributed, said Lady Berine, by injudicious observers, to the cultivation of the mind in females, which absolutely arise from the want of its proper improvement. Accomplishments are not qualities, nor external graces, internal virtues. The intellectual character is not formed on superficial attainments, nor erected upon a foundation so weak as ornamental aquirements. The process of mind arises from the early knowledge and practice of virtues which

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originate in principles implanted in the heart, and which are durable as mind itself. Vanity, pride, self-sufficiency, and arrogance, are not the concomitants of an improved understanding, but the proofs of its deficiency in mental culture. Mind and merit are inseparable. The best daughter, mother, wife, mistress, or servant, is she who best knows her duties, and is most solicitous to perform them properly. A cultivated and well-directed mind cannot prevent a female from accomplishing the duties of any station, but will most asuredly enable her to fulfil every moral obligation with greater credit to herself and advantage to others.

An enlightened mind, said Mrs. Osbourne, is also the best guide to enable a female to avoid the traps and snares spread for her by the artful and designing: not, perhaps, so much through the medium of her superior discrimination, as in her firm adherence to principles and rules of conduct founded upon a strict sense of propriety and rectitude.

Our attention to the elements of political science, said the Vicar, will not, I hope, prevent us from afterwards examining a subject of the

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highest importance to man individually as well as generally, which will naturally arise from the enquiry into Good. Amongst the subjects we have discussed, few were proposed by myself. I have hitherto followed where you have led; and as I have been thus complying with your inclination, with more confidence in your attention shall I proceed to the proposition of a subject which we have not yet investigated, at least in the manner which its importance demands, namely, THE SOVEREIGN GOOD. Good has been the subject of our enquiry: its nature has been noticed, and its causes considered generally as originating in the Source of Existence and Governor of the Universe; but our perceptions on the subject have not been distinct, and our remarks were limited. We have glanced superficially at what appeared above our comprehension; we have amused ourselves in speculations; we have in some instances analyzed principles, and descanted on the causes of obvious effects, but have not properly examined the source from whence they proceed. We formerly made some observations upon virtue, its nature, attainment, and effects, but did not seek for its primeval cause. We have drunk of the streams, but have not sought for the fountain.

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I am not now addressing myself to persons shackled by prejudice and narrow associations: the observations you have made in our preceding conversations prove the contrary. You have entered with almost unprecedented boldness into the most abstruse researches. I have been pleased to see the vigour of youthful talent soaring into disquisitions hitherto only partially investigated. I have not damped the spirit of enquiry, but rather encouraged it. I consider you now as capable of examining and discovering truth; but what truth is, remains a question upon which we have not yet ventured: we have treated of its nature, but not of its essence. My dear children! excuse the anxiety of a father, of a pastor—I would say, of a Christian. I am now sinking into the vale of years. My life has been temperate, therefore I am free from the infirmities occasioned by luxurious habits. My mind has not been suffered to recline in indolence, therefore I am still capable of exercising its faculties; but I feel my blood flow languidly, and my strength and physical powers decrease. My beloved friends! excuse this egotism. You will not long have me with you. Soon shall I appear in the presence of the Supreme Judge, to give an account of the deeds done in the flesh.

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And what have I done to glorify Him who has peculiarly called me to his service? I have led you to knowledge, you will say. To the knowledge of what? To the knowledge of the Deity, in his works. True: this has raised your hearts in devout admiration; but is this all? Alas! a poor account must I render of my stewardship, if this be all I have done for you. My dearest children! you know not what I feel. I am about to appear before the tribunal of Omnipotence; and I leave you—you, whom He has particularlarly committed to my charge—you who were my peculiar trust, still perhaps ignorant of the supreme good, of truth, of the fountain of happiness. O, my children! comfort me in this hour of inconceivable agony; comfort me, at least, with an assurance that you will examine for yourselves—that you will search and ascertain what is the only source of happiness—what only is the sovereign good.

My dear father! said Charles, you distress yourself unnecessarily. We will promise whatever you require. Be comforted. You have done every thing for us—you have led us to knowledge, to virtue, to religion. Heaven will recompense your cares; you will live in our

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hearts for ever; and when removed from this sublunary state, we will strew with flowers of never-ceasing gratitude, the peaceful tomb of our friend, our instructor, our father.

My dear Charles! replied the Vicar, you cannot enter into my feelings. I have ever considered knowledge as the streams that should lead to the fountain of truth. We have been basking in the sweet and flowery vales through which these streams flow, and have not proceeded toward the fountain. It is this which afflicts me; as I fear that I may be called hence before I am fully convinced that you are individually acquainted with the source of felicity—the fountain of eternal love.

My dear sir! explain yourself.

I have ever considered impartial enquiry as a means of expanding the intellectual faculties. I wished that my children and those whom I have ever considered as such, should be able to examine accurately and impartially every subject that was proper for the study of man. I have perceived with pleasure your faculties progressively unfold themselves. I have heard with

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delight, observations that did credit both to your head and to your heart. I have seen admiration beam in your eyes, and observed gratitude glow in your breasts, as we dilated upon the themes of creative goodness and the attributes of unbounded benevolence; but our enquiries have not conducted us to the primeval source; therefore we cannot properly be said to know Him who is life eternal. We perceive him in his works and in his providence; but do we feel him in our hearts? Do we know him experimentally as the Sovereign Good? What I now propose, therefore, is, that we enquire more particularly into the nature of good, or rather ascertain precisely what is the Sovereign Good. You will say it is virtue; but this is not sufficient. I wish to know the cause of virtue, not its nature, nor its effects. 'If ye wish the fruit to be good, take care that the root is so.' I do not propose to guide your enquiries. I leave the research to yourselves. Suffer me only to direct you to the means, which you will find most efficient, in the Word of God. You know the value of history: the Scripture is its origin. You possess sufficient taste and judgement to be able to discern the beauties of composition: you will find the finest examples in Holy Writ. All

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that I require from you is, an impartial perusal of the sacred writings—not to search for historical facts, nor to point out specimens of the sublime and pathetic, with which the work abounds —but for the simple purpose of establishing yourselves in that faith which worketh by love. If religion be a delusion, it is a delightful delusion—a delusion which can constitute our happiness here and cannot prevent it hereafter. My absence from home for a short time is indispensably necessary. We will delay the enquiry until my return. In the mean time I request, I entreat, I enjoin, a careful perusal of the sacred volume; and this not because I enjoin it, but to enable you to form a proper judgement of its contents; and may the Father of Mercies give you understanding hearts and unprejudiced minds, that you may

" Retire, and explore the sacred page,
Where order, wisdom, goodness, providence,
Their endless miracles of love display,
And promise all the truly great desire!
The mind that would be happy must be great,
Great in its wishes, great in its surveys:
Extended views a narrow mind extend:
A man of compass is a man of worth;
Divine contemplate, and become divine.
And what, O Man! so worthy thy research,
What more prepares us for the bliss of Heaven?

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The Soul, ambitious of celestial heights,
Has here a previous scene of objects vast,
On which to dwell, to stretch to that expanse
Of thought, or soar on Meditation's wing,
And give her whole capacities their strength,
Which best may qualify for final joy.
The more our spirits are enlarged on earth,
The deeper draughts shall they receive of heaven."

Not alone the researches of proud philosophy can benefit man: unaided by the sacred light of divine truth, these can be of little avail. To-morrow I begin my journey, and to-morrow do you commence your investigation. On my return, I shall be happy to hear your observations, and hope that you will allow yourselves to reflect impartially on the subject. Let Reason aid your enquiries; but remember, that Faith is the evidence of things unseen. Could we clearly perceive what is now incomprehensible to our limited perceptions, this divine power need not exist, or be as it now is, one of the grand leading doctrines of Christianity. Observations upon nature will assist us in this respect. Who, that perceives a caterpillar crawling on the earth or enclosed in its chrysalis, would imagine that this groveling insect, this shapeless mass, should conceal the beautiful papillio, the sprightly butterfly? Prayer is the greatest privilege of man.

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When I contemplate the goodness of the Almighty, and his ineffable benevolence in permitting his creatures to approach him, I am lost in the conviction of my own unworthiness, and the infinite condescension of the Author of the Universe. In our proposed investigation, let us avail ourselves of this privilege—let us approach the footstool of his divine majesty, and ask of him that wisdom which proceeds alone from above. Adieu, my dear children! I am anxious to know the judgement you will form, and to ascertain by your decision, how far knowledge is subservient to the cause of truth and the best interests of man.

Father of Light and Life! thou GOOD SUPREME!
O teach us what is good! teach us THYSELF!
Save us from folly, vanity, and vice,
From every low pursuit; and feed our souls
With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure,
Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss.

THOMSON.

END OF VOL II.

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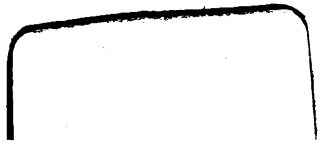

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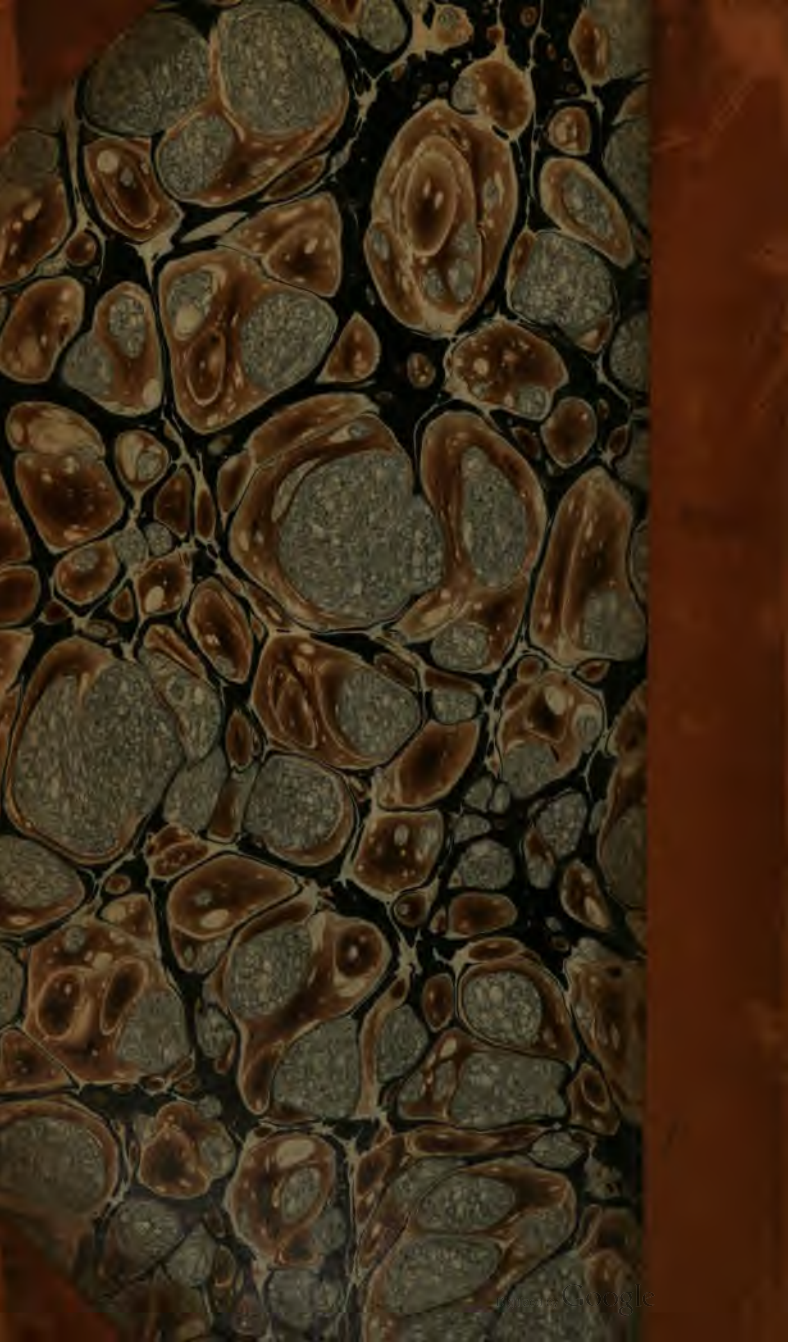

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